

=====

ESSAYS

S

ESSAYS

ESSAYS

ESSAY

GREAT ENGLISH

AND

AMERICAN

ESSAYS

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
DOUGLASS S. MEAD

NEW YORK *Rinehart & Co., Inc.* TORONTO

CA

Red



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



18031

482



BT 01

R61

CHECKED

by

814
M461 G

res

Seventh Printing, July 1956

Introduction copyright, 1950, by Douglass S. Mead

Typography and Cover Design by Stefan Salter

Printed in the United States of America

FOREWORD

The essays in this volume have been chosen with several considerations in view. I have attempted, in the first place, to select pieces which are representative of successive periods in the literary history of England and America, and thus to provide some sense of the development of the essay form in our literature. I have selected only pieces which seemed to me to have some permanent literary value; the collection therefore illustrates a high standard of writing in a variety of essay forms. The essays all seem to me provocative in one way or another, and they represent an intentionally wide variety of themes and points of view; if the collection achieves its purpose, it should be well adapted for class discussion of both content and form. I have attempted to achieve a fruitful balance between the familiar and the new, between classic essayists and less well-known writers. If the reader looks in vain for certain of his favorite essays, it must be confessed that some of the editor's too are missing. I hope that the fresh material I have been able to include will more than compensate for any specific omissions. For the essays of the earlier periods I have provided explanatory footnotes, since many of the references in such pieces are unfamiliar to the contemporary student, especially to the freshman or sophomore. For modern essays, however, since these represent a level of good reading the student can reasonably be expected to carry out on his own, I have provided few footnotes or none at all.

FOREWORD

It is manifestly impossible to cite individually all those who, in one way or another, have helped me in the preparation of this volume. Many persons have been kind. To all of them I offer my grateful thanks.

D. S. MEAD

State College, Pennsylvania
January, 1950

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Foreword	v
<i>Of Marriage and Single Life</i> FRANCIS BACON	1
<i>A Downright Scholar</i> JOHN EARLE	5
<i>The Good Schoolmaster</i> THOMAS FULLER	7
<i>A Superstitious Household</i> JOSEPH ADDISON	13
<i>Ingrafting for Smallpox</i> LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU	19
<i>Gulliver Explains Warfare</i> JONATHAN SWIFT	23
<i>How to Please</i> LORD CHESTERFIELD	29
<i>Dick Minim</i> SAMUEL JOHNSON	35
<i>Of Society and Civilization</i> THOMAS PAINE	41
<i>Characteristics of Shakespeare's Dramas</i> SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE	49
<i>Old China</i> CHARLES LAMB	61
<i>Labor</i> THOMAS CARLYLE	69
<i>Gifts</i> RALPH WALDO EMERSON	75
<i>Literature of Knowledge and Literature of Power</i> THOMAS DEQUINCEY	81
<i>The Dark Mirror</i> JOHN RUSKIN	89
<i>Life Without Principle</i> HENRY DAVID THOREAU	95
<i>A Liberal Education; and Where to Find It</i> THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY	113
<i>Pulvis et Umbra</i> ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON	123
<i>Science and the Savages</i> GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON	133
<i>Quality</i> JOHN GALSWORTHY	143

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Prue</i> ALICE MEYNELL	153
<i>Imagination</i> GEORGE SANTAYANA	159
<i>A Chair of Nonsense</i> BURGESS JOHNSON	165
<i>The Jungle Sluggard</i> WILLIAM BEEBE	175
<i>Science and the Faith of the Modern</i> EDWIN GRANT CONKLIN	191
<i>Comfort</i> ALDOUS HUXLEY	211
<i>Poetry in a Machine Age</i> PAUL ENGLE	225
<i>America's Medieval Women</i> PEARL S. BUCK	241
<i>Creating and Sharing Values</i> LEWIS MUMFORD	259
<i>Editorial</i> E. B. WHITE	269

GREAT ENGLISH AND AMERICAN
ESSAYS

OF MARRIAGE AND SINGLE LIFE

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

From *Essays and Counsels, Civil and Moral*, 1625.

Bacon thought of the essay as a series of random thoughts expressed in terse statements called aphorisms. "Of Marriage and Single Life" combines this aphoristic style with the practical analysis of a problem which young people perennially face. The reader might not always agree.

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, which, both in affection and means, have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times, unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. Some there are, who, though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences; nay, there are some other that account wife and children but as bills of charges; nay, more, there are some foolish rich covetous men that take a pride in having no children, because they may be thought so much the richer; for, perhaps, they have heard some talk, "Such a one is a great rich man," and another except to it, "Yea, but he hath a great charge of children," as if it were an abatement to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single

life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous¹ minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants, but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away, and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates, for if they be facile and corrupt you shall have a servant five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly, in their hortatives, put men in mind of their wives and children. And I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly, wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hard-hearted, good to make severe inquisitors, because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. Grave natures, led by custom, and therefore constant, are commonly loving husbands; as was said of Ulysses, '*Vetulam suam praetulit immortalitati.*'² Chaste women are often proud and froward, as presuming upon the merit of their chastity. It is one of the best bonds, both of chastity and obedience, in the wife if she think her husband wise, which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's nurses; so as a man may have a quarrel³ to marry when he will. But yet he was

¹ Eccentric.

² He preferred his old wife to immortality.

³ Pretext.

reputed one of the wise men that made answer to the question when a man should marry, "A young man not yet, an elder man not at all." It is often seen that bad husbands have very good wives; whether it be that it raiseth the price of their husband's kindness when it comes, or that the wives take a pride in their patience; but this never fails, if the bad husbands were of their own choosing, against their friends' consent; for then they will be sure to make good their own folly.

A DOWNRIGHT SCHOLAR

JOHN EARLE (1600?–1665)

From *Microcosmography*, 1628.

Earle is famous for his "Characters," a variety of essay which displays familiar types of humanity by a sequence of actions. Readers have always been able to fit the descriptions to "people I know," and "the downright scholar" is no exception.

Is one that has much learning in the ore, unwrought and untried, which time and experience fashions and refines. He is good metal in the inside, though rough and unscoured without, and therefore hated of the courtier, that is quite contrary. The time has got a vein of making him ridiculous, and men laugh at him by tradition, and no unlucky absurdity but is put upon his profession, and done like a scholar. But his fault is only this, that his mind is somewhat too much taken up with his mind, and his thoughts not loaden with any carriage besides. He has not put on the quaint garb of the age, which is now a man's *imprimis* and all the *item*.¹ He has not humbled his meditations to the industry of compliment, nor afflicted his brain in an elaborate leg. His body is not set upon nice pins, to be turning and flexible for every motion, but his scrape is homely and his nod worse. He cannot kiss his hand and cry, "Madam," nor talk idly enough to bear her company. His smacking of a gentlewoman is

¹ All in all.

somewhat too savory, and he mistakes her nose for her lip. A very woodcock would puzzle him in carving, and he wants the logic of a capon. He has not the glib faculty of sliding over a tale, but his words come squeamishly out of his mouth, and the laughter commonly before the jest. He names this word college too often, and his discourse bears too much on the university. The perplexity of mannerliness will not let him feed, and he is sharp set at an argument when he should cut his meat. He is discarded for a gamester at all games but one and thirty, and at tables he reaches not beyond doublets. His fingers are not long and drawn out to handle a fiddle, but his fist is clunched with the habit of disputing. He ascends a horse somewhat sinisterly, though not on the left side, and they both go jogging in grief together. He is exceedingly censured by the Inns of Court men for that heinous vice, being out of fashion. He cannot speak to a dog in his own dialect, and understands Greek better than the language of a falconer. He has been used to a dark room, and dark clothes, and his eyes dazzle at a satin doublet. The hermitage of his study has made him somewhat uncouth in the world, and men make him worse by staring on him. Thus is he silly and ridiculous, and it continues with him for some quarter of a year out of the university. But practise him a little in men, and brush him o'er with good company, and he shall outbalance those glisterers as far as a solid substance does a feather, or gold, gold-lace.

THE GOOD SCHOOLMASTER

THOMAS FULLER (1608–1661)

From *Holy and Profane States*, 1642.

Fuller put life into the character essay by adding illustrations and examples, with the result that the “good schoolmaster” takes on the stature of a lovable human being. The reader will also be surprised to learn how much of the pedagogy of the 17th century is still valid.

There is scarce any profession in the commonwealth more necessary which is so slightly performed. The reasons whereof I conceive to be these: First, young scholars make this calling their refuge, yea, perchance, before they have taken any degree in the university, commence schoolmasters in the country, as if nothing else were required to set up this profession but only a rod and a ferula. Secondly, others who are able use it only as a passage to better preferment, to patch the rents in their present fortune till they can provide a new one, and betake themselves to some more gainful calling. Thirdly, they are disheartened from doing their best with the miserable reward which in some places they receive, being masters to the children and slaves to their parents. Fourthly, being grown rich, they grow negligent, and scorn to touch the school but by the proxy of an usher. But see how well our schoolmaster behaves himself.

His genius inclines him with delight to his profession. Some men had as lief be schoolboys as schoolmasters, to be

tied to the school, as Cooper's "Dictionary" and Scapula's "Lexicon" are chained to the desks therein; and though great scholars, and skilful in other arts, are bunglers in this: but God of His goodness hath fitted several men for several callings, that the necessity of Church and State in all conditions may be provided for. So that he who beholds the fabric thereof may say, "God hewed out this stone, and appointed it to lie in this very place, for it would fit none other so well, and here it doth most excellent." And thus God mouldeth some for a schoolmaster's life, undertaking it with desire and delight, and discharging it with dexterity and happy success.

He studieth his scholars' natures as carefully as they their books, and ranks their dispositions into several forms. And though it may seem difficult for him in a great school to descend to all particulars, yet experienced schoolmasters may quickly make a grammar of boys' natures, and reduce them all, saving some few exceptions, to these general rules:

1. Those that are ingenious and industrious. The conjunction of two such planets in a youth presages much good unto him. To such a lad a frown may be a whipping, and a whipping a death; yea, where their master whips them once, shame whips them all the week after. Such natures he useth with all gentleness.

2. Those that are ingenious and idle. These think, with the hare in the fable, that running with snails (so they count the rest of their schoolfellows) they shall come soon enough to the post, though sleeping a good while before their starting. Oh, a good rod would finely take them napping.

3. Those that are dull and diligent. Wines, the stronger they be, the more lees they have when they are new. Many

boys are muddy-headed till they be clarified with age, and such afterwards prove the best. Bristol diamonds¹ are both bright and squared and pointed by nature, and yet are soft and worthless; whereas orient ones in India are rough and rugged naturally. Hard, rugged, and dull natures of youth acquit themselves afterwards the jewels of the country, and therefore their dullness at first is to borne with, if they be diligent. That schoolmaster deserves to be beaten himself who beats nature in a boy for a fault. And I question whether all the whipping in the world can make their parts, which are naturally sluggish, rise one minute before the hour nature hath appointed.

4. Those that are invincibly dull and negligent also. Correction may reform the latter, not amend the former. All the whetting in the world can never set a razor's edge on that which hath no steel in it. Such boys he consigneth over to other professions. Shipwrights and boatmakers will choose those crooked pieces of timber which other carpenters refuse. Those may make excellent merchants and mechanics who will not serve for scholars.

He is able, diligent, and methodical in his teaching; not leading them rather in a circle than forwards. He minces his precepts for children to swallow, hanging clogs on the nimbleness of his own soul, that his scholars may go along with him.

He is and will be known to be an absolute monarch in his school. If cockering mothers proffer him money to purchase their sons an exemption from his rod (to live as it were in a peculiar, out of their master's jurisdiction), with disdain he refuseth it, and scorns the late custom, in some

¹ Rock crystals.

places, of commuting whipping into money, and ransoming boys from the rod at a set price. If he hath a stubborn youth, correction-proof, he debaseth not his authority by contesting with him, but fairly, if he can, puts him away before his obstinacy hath affected others.

He is moderate in inflicting deserved correction. Many a schoolmaster better answereth the name παιδοτρίβης than παιδαγωγός, rather tearing his scholars' flesh with whipping than giving them good education. No wonder if his scholars hate the muses, being presented unto them in the shapes of fiends and furies. Junius complains *de insolenti carnificina*¹ of his schoolmaster, by whom *conscindebatur flagris septies aut octies in dies singulos*.² Yea, hear the lamentable verses of poor Tusser in his own life:

*"From Paul's I went, to Eton sent,
To learn straightways the Latin phrase,
Where fifty-three stripes, given to me
At once I had.*

*"For fault but small, or none at all,
It came to pass thus beat I was;
See Udall, see, the mercy of thee,
To me, poor lad."*

Such an Orbilius³ mars more scholars than he makes: their tyranny hath caused many tongues to stammer, which spake plain by nature, and whose stuttering at first was

¹ Of harsh brutality.

² He was torn with whips seven or eight times a day.

³ Teacher of the poet Horace and notorious for his flogging.

nothing else but fears quavering on their speech at their master's presence; and whose mauling them about their heads hath dulled those who, in quickness, exceeded their master.

He makes his school free to him who sues to him *in forma pauperis*.¹ And surely learning is the greatest alms that can be given. But he is a beast who, because the poor scholar cannot pay him his wages, pays the scholar in his whipping. Rather are diligent lads to be encouraged with all excitements to learning. This minds me of what I have heard concerning Mr. Bust, that worthy late schoolmaster of Eton, who would never suffer any wandering begging scholar (such as justly the statute hath ranked in the forefront of rogues) to come into his school, but would thrust him out with earnestness (however privately charitable unto him), lest his schoolboys should be disheartened from their books by seeing some scholars, after their studying in the university, preferred to beggary.

He spoils not a good school to make thereof a bad college, therein to teach his scholars logic. For, besides that logic may have an action of trespass against grammar for encroaching on her liberties, syllogisms are solecisms taught in the school, and oftentimes they are forced afterwards in the university to unlearn the fumbling skill they had before.

Out of his school he is no whit pedantical in carriage or discourse; contenting himself to be rich in Latin, though he doth not jingle with it in every company wherein he comes.

To conclude, let this amongst other motives make schoolmasters careful in their place, that the eminencies of their scholars have commended the memories of their schoolmasters to posterity, who otherwise in obscurity had al-

¹ As a pauper.

together been forgotten. Who had ever heard of R. Bond, in Lancashire, but for the breeding of learned Ascham, his scholar? or of Hartgrave, in Brundly school, in the same county, but because he was the first did teach worthy Dr. Whitaker? Nor do I honour the memory of Mulcaster for anything so much as for his scholar, that gulf of learning, Bishop Andrews. This made the Athenians, the day before the great feast of Theseus, their founder, to sacrifice a ram to the memory of Conidas, his schoolmaster that first instructed him.

A SUPERSTITIOUS HOUSEHOLD

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

The Spectator for March 8, 1711.

Joseph Addison and his equally famous collaborator Richard Steele perfected the periodical essay. Day after day *The Spectator* offered its readers serious discourse, wholesome entertainment, or a pleasant corrective for social foibles. This gentle satire on besetting superstitions is apt to nudge those people who are forever knocking on wood.

*Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides?*¹

Horace

Going yesterday to dine with an old acquaintance, I had the misfortune to find his whole family very much dejected. Upon asking him the occasion of it, he told me that his wife had dreamt a very strange dream the night before, which they were afraid portended some misfortune to themselves or to their children. At her coming into the room, I observed a settled melancholy in her countenance, which I should have been troubled for, had I not heard from whence it proceeded. We were no sooner sat down, but, after having looked upon me a little while, "My dear," says she, turning to her husband, "you may now see the stranger that was

¹ "Can you make sport of portents, gipsy crones,
Hobgoblins, dreams, raw head and bloody bones?"

—John Conington

in the candle last night." Soon after this, as they began to talk of family affairs, a little boy at the lower end of the table told her that he was to go into join-hand¹ on Thursday. "Thursday?" says she, "no, child, if it please God, you shall not begin upon Childermas Day;² tell your writing master that Friday will be soon enough." I was reflecting with myself on the oddness of her fancy, and wondering that anybody would establish it as a rule to lose a day in every week. In the midst of these my musings, she desired me to reach her a little salt upon the point of my knife, which I did in such a trepidation and hurry of obedience, that I let it drop by the way; at which she immediately startled, and said it fell towards her. Upon this I looked very blank; and, observing the concern of the whole table, began to consider myself, with some confusion, as a person that had brought a disaster upon the family. The lady however recovering herself, after a little space, said to her husband with a sigh, "My dear, misfortunes never come single." My friend, I found, acted but an under part at his table, and being a man of more good nature than understanding, thinks himself obliged to fall in with all the passions and humors of his yoke-fellow. "Do not you remember, child," says she, "that the pigeon-house fell the very afternoon that our careless wench spilt the salt upon the table?" "Yes," says he, "my dear, and the next post brought us an account of the battle of Almanza." The reader may guess at the figure I made, after having done all this mischief. I despatched my dinner as soon as I could, with my usual taciturnity; when, to my utter confusion, the lady seeing me cleaning my knife

¹ A flowing style of hand-writing.

² December 28, supposedly a day of bad fortune.

and fork, and laying them across one another upon my plate, desired me that I would humor her so far as to take them out of that figure, and place them side by side. What the absurdity was which I had committed I did not know, but I suppose there was some traditionary superstition in it; and therefore, in obedience to the lady of the house, I disposed of my knife and fork in two parallel lines, which is the figure I shall always lay them in for the future, though I do not know any reason for it.

It is not difficult for a man to see that a person has conceived an aversion to him. For my own part, I quickly found, by the lady's looks, that she regarded me as a very odd kind of fellow, with an unfortunate aspect: for which reason I took my leave immediately after dinner, and withdrew to my own lodgings. Upon my return home, I fell into a profound contemplation on the evils that attend these superstitious follies of mankind; how they subject us to imaginary afflictions, and additional sorrows, that do not properly come within our lot. As if the natural calamities of life were not sufficient for it, we turn the most indifferent circumstances into misfortunes, and suffer as much from trifling accidents as from real evils. I have known the shooting of a star spoil a night's rest; and have seen a man in love grow pale and lose his appetite upon the plucking of a merry-thought.¹ A screech owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket hath struck more terror than the roaring of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable, which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens and prognostics. A rusty nail, or a crooked pin, shoot up into prodigies.

¹ A wishbone.

I remember I was once in a mixed assembly, that was full of noise and mirth, when on a sudden an old woman unluckily observed there were thirteen of us in company. This remark struck a panic terror into several who were present, insomuch that one or two of the ladies were going to leave the room; but a friend of mine taking notice that one of our female companions was big with child, affirmed there were fourteen in the room, and that, instead of portending one of the company should die, it plainly foretold one of them should be born. Had not my friend found this expedient to break the omen, I question not but half the women in the company would have fallen sick that very night.

An old maid, that is troubled with the vapors, produces infinite disturbances of this kind among her friends and neighbors. I know a maiden aunt of a great family, who is one of these antiquated Sibyls, that forebodes and prophesies from one end of the year to the other. She is always seeing apparitions, and hearing death-watches; and was the other day almost frightened out of her wits by the great house-dog, that howled in the stable at a time when she lay ill of the tooth-ache. Such an extravagant cast of mind engages multitudes of people not only in impertinent terrors, but in super-numerary duties of life; and arises from that fear and ignorance which are natural to the soul of man. The horror with which we entertain the thoughts of death (or indeed of any future evil) and the uncertainty of its approach, fill a melancholy mind with innumerable apprehensions and suspicions, and consequently dispose it to the observation of such groundless prodigies and predictions. For as it is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils of life by the rea-

sonings of philosophy; it is the employment of fools to multiply them by the sentiments of superstition.

For my own part, I should be very much troubled were I endowed with this divining quality, though it should inform me truly of every thing that can befall me. I would not anticipate the relish of any happiness, nor feel the weight of any misery, before it actually arrives.

I know but one way of fortifying my soul against these gloomy presages and terrors of mind, and that is, by securing to myself the friendship and protection of that Being who disposes of events, and governs futurity. He sees, at one view, the whole thread of my existence, not only that part of it which I have already passed through, but that which runs forward into all the depths of eternity. When I lay me down to sleep, I recommend myself to his care; when I awake, I give myself up to his direction. Amidst all the evils that threaten me, I will look up to him for help, and question not but he will either avert them, or turn them to my advantage. Though I know neither the time nor the manner of the death I am to die, I am not at all solicitous about it; because I am sure that he knows them both, and that he will not fail to comfort and support me under them.

INGRAFTING FOR SMALLPOX

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU (1689-1762)

From Letters During the Embassy to Constantinople.

Lady Mary, as the wife of the ambassador, spent two years in Turkey and regaled her friends at home with vivacious accounts of the life she found there. One of her discoveries was that the Turks had a simple remedy for smallpox,—and this more than a half century before Jenner.

TO MRS. S. C—— [MISS SARAH CHISWELL].

Adrianople, April 1, O.S. [1717].

In my opinion, dear S., I ought rather to quarrel with you for not answering my Nimeguen letter of August till December, than to excuse my not writing again till now. I am sure there is on my side a very good excuse for silence, having gone such tiresome land-journeys, though I don't find the conclusion of them so bad as you seem to imagine. I am very easy here, and not in the solitude you fancy me. The great quantity of Greek, French, English, and Italians, that are under our protection, make their court to me from morning till night; and, I'll assure you, are many of them very fine ladies; for there is no possibility for a Christian to live easily under this government but by the protection of an ambassador—and the richer they are, the greater their danger.

Those dreadful stories you have heard of the plague have very little foundation in truth. I own I have much ado

to reconcile myself to the sound of a word which has always given me such terrible ideas, though I am convinced there is little more in it than a fever. As a proof of which we passed through two or three towns most violently infected. In the very next house where we lay (in one of those places) two persons died of it. Luckily for me, I was so well deceived that I knew nothing of the matter; and I was made believe, that our second cook who feel ill here had only a great cold. However, we left our doctor to take care of him, and yesterday they both arrived here in good health; and I am now let into the secret that he has had the *plague*. There are many that escape it; neither is the air ever infected. I am persuaded it would be as easy to root it out here as out of Italy and France; but it does so little mischief, they are not very solicitous about it, and are content to suffer this distemper instead of our variety, which they are utterly unacquainted with.

A propos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing that I am sure will make you wish yourself here. The small-pox, so fatal, and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of *ingrafting*, which is the term they give it. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox: they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together), the old woman comes with a nut-shell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox, and asks what veins you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more

pain than a common scratch), and puts into the vein as much venom as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell; and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, in each arm, and on the breast, to mark the sign of the cross; but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who choose to have them in the legs, or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health to the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark; and in eight days' time they are as well as before their illness. Where they are wounded, there remain running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year thousands undergo this operation; and the French ambassador says pleasantly, that they take the small-pox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it; and you may believe I am very well satisfied of the safety of this experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son.

I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England; and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it, if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good of mankind. But that distemper is too beneficial to them not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight

that should undertake to put an end to it. Perhaps, if I live to return, I may, however, have courage to war with them. Upon this occasion admire the heroism in the heart of your friend, &c.

GULLIVER EXPLAINS WARFARE

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

From *Gulliver's Travels*, Part IV, Ch. 5, 1726.

Swift made use of bitter irony to expose the disgusting and sordid side of human nature. Gulliver finds himself in a land governed by the Houyhnhnms, a race of benevolent horses, whereas the counterpart of man is the dirty, filthy beast called the Yahoo. In great humiliation Gulliver discovers that he is a Yahoo. In an effort to explain the exalted position of Yahoos in other lands he expostulates zealously upon the wonders of European culture, but unwittingly he makes a mockery of his world. The exultant account of European warfare contains a powerful undercurrent of ridicule.

The reader may please to observe that the following extract of many conversations I had with my master, contains a summary of the most material points which were discoursed at several times, for above two years, his Honor often desiring fuller satisfaction, as I farther improved in the Houyhnhnm tongue. I laid before him, as well as I could, the whole state of Europe; I discoursed of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences; and the answers I gave to all the questions he made, as they arose upon several subjects, were a fund of conversation not to be exhausted. But I shall here only set down the substance of what passed between us concerning my own country, reducing it into order as well as I can, without any regard to time, or other circumstances, while I strictly adhere to truth. My only concern is, that I

shall hardly be able to do justice to my master's arguments and expressions, which must needs suffer by my want of capacity, as well as by a translation into our barbarous English.

In obedience, therefore, to his Honor's commands, I related to him the revolution under the Prince of Orange; the long war with France entered into by the said Prince, and renewed by his successor the present Queen, wherein the greatest powers of Christendom were engaged, and which still continued; I computed, at his request, that about a million of Yahoos might have been killed in the whole progress of it, and perhaps a hundred or more cities taken, and five times as many ships burnt or sunk.

He asked me what were the usual causes or motives that made one country go to war with another. I answered they were innumerable; but I should only mention a few of the chief. Sometimes the ambition of princes, who never think they have land or people enough to govern; sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war in order to stifle or divert the clamor of the subjects against their evil administration. Difference in opinion hath cost many millions of lives: for instance, whether flesh be bread, or bread be flesh; whether the juice of a certain berry be blood or wine; whether whistling be a vice or virtue; whether it be better to kiss a post, or throw it into the fire; what is the best color for a coat,—whether black, white, red, or gray; and whether it should be long or short, narrow or wide, dirty or clean; with many more. Neither are any wars so furious and bloody, or of so long continuance, as those occasioned by difference in opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent.

Sometimes the quarrel between two princes is to decide

which of them shall dispossess a third of his dominions, where neither of them pretend to any right. Sometimes one prince quarreleth with another, for fear the other should quarrel with him. Sometimes a war is entered upon, because the enemy is too strong; and sometimes because he is too weak. Sometimes our neighbors want the things which we have, or have the things which we want; and we both fight, till they take ours, or give us theirs. It is a very justifiable cause of a war, to invade a country, after the people have been wasted by famine, destroyed by pestilence, or embroiled by factions among themselves. It is justifiable to enter into war against our nearest ally, when one of his towns lies convenient for us, or a territory of land, that would render our dominions round and complete. If a prince sends forces into a nation where the people are poor and ignorant, he may lawfully put half of them to death, and make slaves of the rest, in order to civilize and reduce them from their barbarous way of living. It is a very kingly, honorable, and frequent practice, when one prince desires the assistance of another to secure him against an invasion, that the assistant, when he hath driven out the invader, should seize on the dominions himself, and kill, imprison, or banish the prince he came to relieve. Alliance by blood or marriage is a frequent cause of war between princes; and the nearer the kindred is, the greater is their disposition to quarrel. Poor nations are hungry, and rich nations are proud; and pride and hunger will ever be at variance. For these reasons, the trade of a soldier is held the most honorable of all others; because a soldier is a Yahoo hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species, who had never offended him, as possibly he can.

There is likewise a kind of beggarly princes in Europe, not able to make war by themselves, who hire out their troops to richer nations, for so much a day to each man; of which they keep three fourths to themselves, and it is the best part of their maintenance; such are those in many northern parts of Europe.

What you have told me, (said my master) upon the subject of war, does indeed discover most admirably the effects of that reason you pretend to: however, it is happy that the shame is greater than the danger; and that nature hath left you utterly incapable of doing much mischief.

For your mouths lying flat with your faces, you can hardly bite each other to any purpose, unless by consent. Then as to the claws upon your feet before and behind, they are so short and tender, that one of our *Yahoos* would drive a dozen of yours before him. And therefore in recounting the numbers of those who have been killed in battle, I cannot but think that you have *said the thing which is not*.

I could not forbear shaking my head, and smiling a little at his ignorance. And being no stranger to the art of war, I gave him a description of cannons, culverins, muskets, carabines, pistols, bullets, powder, swords, bayonets, battles, sieges, retreats, attacks, undermines, countermines, bombardments, sea fights; ships sunk with a thousand men, twenty thousand killed on each side; dying groans, limbs flying in the air, smoke, noise, confusion, trampling to death under horses' feet; flight, pursuit, victory; fields strewed with carcases left for food to dogs, and wolves, and birds of prey; plundering, stripping, ravishing, burning and destroying. And to set forth the valour of my own dear countrymen, I

assured him, that I had seen them blow up a hundred enemies at once in a siege, and as many in a ship, and beheld the dead bodies drop down in pieces from the clouds, to the great diversion of the spectators.

I was going on to more particulars, when my master commanded me silence. He said, whoever understood the nature of *Yahoos* might easily believe it possible for so vile an animal, to be capable of every action I had named, if their strength and cunning equalled their malice. But as my discourse had increased his abhorrence of the whole species, so he found it gave him a disturbance in his mind, to which he was wholly a stranger before. He thought his ears being used to such abominable words, might by degrees admit them with less detestation. That although he hated the *Yahoos* of this country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious qualities, than he did a *gmayb* (a bird of prey) for its cruelty, or a sharp stone for cutting his hoof. But when a creature pretending to reason, could be capable of such enormities, he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty might be worse than brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of reason, we were only possessed of some quality fitted to increase our natural vices; as the reflection from a troubled stream returns the image of an ill-shapen body, not only larger, but more distorted.

HOW TO PLEASE

LORD CHESTERFIELD (1694-1773)

From *Letters to His Son*.

Chesterfield wanted his son to be a scholar, a gentleman, and a career diplomat. The letters are a correspondence course adapted to the peculiar needs of his son. Lest the boy should falter in the competitive social whirl, his father emphasizes suave deportment and astute tact as requisites for success. Perhaps he overdoes it.

LONDON, October 16, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY:

The art of pleasing is a very necessary one to possess, but a very difficult one to acquire. It can hardly be reduced to rules; and your own good sense and observation will teach you more of it than I can. "Do as you would be done by," is the surest method that I know of pleasing. Observe carefully what pleases you in others, and probably the same things in you will please others. If you are pleased with the complaisance and attention of others to your humours, your tastes, or your weaknesses, depend upon it, the same complaisance and attention on your part to theirs will equally please them. Take the tone of the company that you are in, and do not pretend to give it; be serious, gay, or even trifling, as you find the present humour of the company; this is an attention due from every individual to the majority. Do not tell stories in company; there is nothing more tedious and disagreeable; if by chance you know a very short story,

and exceedingly applicable to the present subject of conversation, tell it in as few words as possible; and even then, throw out that you do not love to tell stories, but that the shortness of it tempted you.

Of all things, banish the egotism out of your conversation, and never think of entertaining people with your own personal concerns or private affairs; though they are interesting to you, they are tedious and impertinent to everybody else; besides that, one cannot keep one's own private affairs too secret. Whatever you think your own excellencies may be, do not affectedly display them in company; nor labour, as many people do, to give that turn to the conversation, which may supply you with an opportunity of exhibiting them. If they are real, they will infallibly be discovered, without your pointing them out yourself, and with much more advantage. Never maintain an argument with heat and clamour, though you think or know yourself to be in the right; but give your opinion modestly and coolly, which is the only way to convince; and, if that does not do, try to change the conversation, by saying, with good-humour, "We shall hardly convince one another; nor is it necessary that we should, so let us talk of something else."

Remember that there is a local propriety to be observed in all companies; and that what is extremely proper in one company may be, and often is, highly improper in another.

The jokes, the *bon-mots*, the little adventures, which may do very well in one company, will seem flat and tedious, when related in another. The particular characters, the habits, the cant of one company may give merit to a word, or a gesture, which would have none at all if divested of those accidental circumstances. Here people very commonly

err; and fond of something that has entertained them in one company, and in certain circumstances, repeat it with emphasis in another, where it is either insipid, or, it may be, offensive, by being ill-timed or misplaced. Nay, they often do it with this silly preamble: "I will tell you an excellent thing," or, "I will tell you the best thing in the world." This raises expectations, which, when absolutely disappointed, make the relator of this excellent thing look, very deservedly, like a fool.

If you would particularly gain the affection and friendship of particular people, whether men or women, endeavour to find out their predominant excellency, if they have one, and their prevailing weakness, which everybody has; and do justice to the one, and something more than justice to the other. Men have various objects in which they may excel, or at least would be thought to excel; and, though they love to hear justice done to them, where they know that they excel, yet they are most and best flattered upon those points where they wish to excel, and yet are doubtful whether they do or not. As for example: Cardinal Richelieu, who was undoubtedly the ablest statesman of his time, or perhaps of any other, had the idle vanity of being thought the best poet too; he envied the great Corneille his reputation, and ordered a criticism to be written upon the *Cid*. Those, therefore, who flattered skilfully, said little to him of his abilities in state affairs, or at least but *en passant*, and as it might naturally occur. But the incense which they gave him, the smoke of which they knew would turn his head in their favour, was as a *bel esprit* and a poet. Why? Because he was sure of one excellency, and distrustful as to the other.

You will easily discover every man's prevailing vanity

by observing his favourite topic of conversation; for every man talks most of what he has most a mind to be thought to excel in. Touch him but there, and you touch him to the quick. The late Sir Robert Walpole (who was certainly an able man) was little open to flattery upon that head, for he was in no doubt himself about it; but his prevailing weakness was, to be thought to have a polite and happy turn to gallantry—of which he had undoubtedly less than any man living. It was his favourite and frequent subject of conversation, which proved to those who had any penetration that it was his prevailing weakness, and they applied to it with success.

Women have, in general, but one object, which is their beauty; upon which scarce any flattery is too gross for them to follow. Nature has hardly formed a woman ugly enough to be insensible to flattery upon her person; if her face is so shocking that she must, in some degree, be conscious of it, her figure and air, she trusts, make ample amends for it. If her figure is deformed, her face, she thinks, counterbalances it. If they are both bad, she comforts herself that she has graces, a certain manner, a *je ne sçais quoi* still more engaging than beauty. This truth is evident from the studied and elaborate dress of the ugliest woman in the world. An undoubted, uncontested, conscious beauty is, of all women, the least sensible of flattery upon that head; she knows it is her due, and is therefore obliged to nobody for giving it her. She must be flattered upon her understanding; which, though she may possibly not doubt of herself, yet she suspects that men may distrust.

Do not mistake me, and think that I mean to recommend to you abject and criminal flattery: no; flatter nobody's vices or crimes: on the contrary, abhor and discour-

age them. But there is no living in the world without a complaisant indulgence for people's weaknesses, and innocent, though ridiculous vanities. If a man has a mind to be thought wiser, and a woman handsomer, than they really are, their error is a comfortable one to themselves, and an innocent one with regard to other people; and I would rather make them my friends by indulging them in it, than my enemies by endeavouring (and that to no purpose) to undeceive them.

There are little attentions, likewise, which are infinitely engaging, and which sensibly affect that degree of pride and self-love, which is inseparable from human nature, as they are unquestionable proofs of the regard and consideration which we have for the persons to whom we pay them. As, for example, to observe the little habits, the likings, the antipathies, and the tastes of those whom we would gain; and then take care to provide them with the one, and to secure them from the other; giving them, genteelly, to understand, that you had observed they liked such a dish, or such a room, for which reason you had prepared it: or, on the contrary, that having observed they had an aversion to such a dish, a dislike to such a person, etc., you had taken care to avoid presenting them. Such attention to such trifles flatters self-love much more than greater things, as it makes people think themselves almost the only objects of your thoughts and care.

These are some of the arcana necessary for your initiation in the great society of the world. I wish I had known them better at your age; I have paid the price of three and fifty years for them, and shall not grudge it if you reap the advantage. Adieu.

DICK MINIM

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)

From *The Idler* for June 9, 1759.

Samuel Johnson, foremost literary critic of the 18th century, lampoons trite attitudes by filling the mind and mouth of Dick Minim with current critical clichés. It is noteworthy that satirists of today have found amusement in a similar use of the cliché.

Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be obtained is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a Critic.

I hope it will give comfort to great numbers who are passing through the world in obscurity, when I inform them how easily distinction may be obtained. All the other powers of literature are coy and haughty, they must be long courted, and at last are not always gained; but Criticism is a goddess easy of access and forward of advance, who will meet the slow, and encourage the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words, and the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity.

This profession has one recommendation peculiar to it-

self, that it gives vent to malignity without real mischief. No genius was ever blasted by the breath of critics. The poison which, if confined, would have burst the heart, fumes away in empty hisses, and malice is set at ease with very little danger to merit. The critic is the only man whose triumph is without another's pain, and whose greatness does not rise upon another's ruin.

To a study at once so easy and so reputable, so malicious and so harmless, it cannot be necessary to invite my readers by a long or laboured exhortation; it is sufficient, since all would be critics if they could, to shew by one eminent example that all can be critics if they will.

Dick Minim, after the common course of puerile studies, in which he was no great proficient, was put an apprentice to a brewer, with whom he had lived two years, when his uncle died in the city, and left him a large fortune in the stocks. Dick had for six months before used the company of the lower players, of whom he had learned to scorn a trade, and, being now at liberty to follow his genius, he resolved to be a man of wit and humour. That he might be properly initiated in his new character, he frequented the coffee-houses near the theatres, where he listened very diligently, day after day, to those who talked of language and sentiments, and unities and catastrophes, till by slow degrees he began to think that he understood something of the stage, and hoped in time to talk himself.

But he did not trust so much to natural sagacity as wholly to neglect the help of books. When the theatres were shut, he retired to Richmond with a few select writers, whose opinions he impressed upon his memory by unwearied diligence; and, when he returned with other wits to

the town, was able to tell, in very proper phrases, that the chief business of art is to copy nature; that a perfect writer is not to be expected, because genius decays as judgment increases; that the great art is the art of blotting; and that, according to the rule of Horace, every piece should be kept nine years.

Of the great authors he now began to display the characters, laying down, as an universal position, that all had beauties and defects. His opinion was that Shakspeare, committing himself wholly to the impulse of nature, wanted that correctness which learning would have given him; and that Jonson, trusting to learning, did not sufficiently cast his eye on nature. He blamed the stanza of Spenser, and could not bear the hexameters of Sidney. Denham and Waller he held the first reformers of English numbers; and thought that if Waller could have obtained the strength of Denham, or Denham the sweetness of Waller, there had been nothing wanting to complete a poet. He often expressed his commiseration of Dryden's poverty, and his indignation at the age which suffered him to write for bread; he repeated with rapture the first lines of *All for Love*, but wondered at the corruption of taste which could bear any thing so unnatural as rhyming tragedies. In Otway he found uncommon powers of moving the passions, but was disgusted by his general negligence, and blamed him for making a conspirator his hero; and never concluded his disquisition without remarking how happily the sound of the clock is made to alarm the audience. Southern would have been his favourite, but that he mixes comic with tragic scenes, intercepts the natural course of the passions, and fills the mind with a wild confusion of mirth and melancholy. The versification of Rowe

he thought too melodious for the stage, and too little varied in different passions. He made it the great fault of Congreve, that all his persons were wits, and that he always wrote with more art than nature. He considered *Cato* rather as a poem than a play, and allowed Addison to be the complete master of allegory and grave humour, but paid no great deference to him as a critic. He thought the chief merit of Prior was in his easy tales and lighter poems, though he allowed that his *Solomon* had many noble sentiments elegantly expressed. In Swift he discovered an inimitable vein of irony, and an easiness which all would hope and few would attain. Pope he was inclined to degrade from a poet to a versifier, and thought his numbers rather luscious than sweet. He often lamented the neglect of *Phaedra* and *Hippolytus*,¹ and wished to see the stage under better regulations.

These assertions passed commonly uncontradicted; and if now and then an opponent started up, he was quickly repressed by the suffrages of the company, and Minim went away from every dispute with elation of heart and increase of confidence.

He now grew conscious of his abilities, and began to talk of the present state of dramatic poetry; wondered what was become of the comic genius which supplied our ancestors with wit and pleasantries, and why no writer could be found that durst now venture beyond a farce. He saw no reason for thinking that the vein of humour was exhausted, since we live in a country where liberty suffers every character to spread itself to its utmost bulk, and which therefore produces more originals than all the rest of the world together. Of tragedy he concluded business to be the soul,

¹ By Edmund Smith.

and yet often hinted that love predominates too much upon the modern stage.

He was now an acknowledged critic, and had his own seat in a coffee-house, and headed a party in the pit. Minim has more vanity than ill-nature, and seldom desires to do much mischief; he will, perhaps, murmur a little in the ear of him that sits next him, but endeavours to influence the audience to favour, by clapping when an actor exclaims, "Ye gods!" or laments the misery of his country.

By degrees he was admitted to rehearsals; and many of his friends are of opinion that our present poets are indebted to him for their happiest thoughts; by his contrivance the bell was rung twice in *Barbarossa*,¹ and by his persuasion the author of *Cleone*² concluded his play without a couplet; for what can be more absurd, said Minim, than that part of a play should be rhymed, and part written in blank verse? And by what acquisition of faculties is the speaker, who never could find rhymes before, enabled to rhyme at the conclusion of an act?

He is the great investigator of hidden beauties, and is particularly delighted when he finds "the sound an echo to the sense." He has read all our poets with particular attention to this delicacy of versification, and wonders at the supineness with which their works have been hitherto perused, so that no man has found the sound of a drum in this distich:

*And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
Was beat with fist instead of a stick;*

¹ By John Brown.

² By Robert Dodsley.

and that the wonderful lines upon honour and a bubble have hitherto passed without notice:

*Honour is like the glassy bubble
Which costs philosophers such trouble;
Where, one part cracked, the whole does fly,
And wits are cracked to find out why.*

In these verses, says Minim, we have two striking accommodations of the sound to the sense. It is impossible to utter the two lines emphatically without an act like that which they describe; *bubble* and *trouble* causing a momentary inflation of the cheeks by the retention of the breath, which is afterwards forcibly emitted, as in the practice of *blowing bubbles*. But the greatest excellence is in the third line, which is *cracked* in the middle, to express a crack, and then shivers into monosyllables. Yet has this diamond lain neglected with common stones, and among the innumerable admirers of *Hudibras*¹ the observation of this superlative passage has been reserved for the sagacity of Minim.

¹ By Samuel Butler.

OF SOCIETY AND CIVILIZATION

THOMAS PAINE (1738-1809)

From *The Rights of Man*, Part Second, Ch. 1, 1791.

Out of the milieu that produced the doctrine that all men are created equal came Tom Paine. In his opinion all governments were oppressive, whereas mankind, untrammelled and uncoerced, would display his innate nobility and live amicably with his neighbor. It can be seen that Paine was neither wholly right nor wholly wrong.

Great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of a civilised community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine, society performs for itself almost everything which is ascribed to government.

To understand the nature and quantity of government proper for man, it is necessary to attend to his character. As

nature created him for social life, she fitted him for the station she intended. In all cases she made his natural wants greater than his individual powers. No one man is capable, without the aid of society, of supplying his own wants; and those wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a centre.

But she has gone further. She has not only forced man into society by a diversity of wants which the reciprocal aid of each other can supply, but she has implanted in him a system of social affections, which, though not necessary to his existence, are essential to his happiness. There is no period in life when this love for society ceases to act. It begins and ends with our being.

If we examine with attention the composition and constitution of man, the diversity of his wants and talents in different men for reciprocally accommodating the wants of each other, his propensity to society, and consequently to preserve the advantages resulting from it, we shall easily discover that a great part of what is called government is mere imposition.

Government is no farther necessary than to supply the few cases to which society and civilisation are not conveniently competent; and instances are not wanting to show, that everything which government can usefully add thereto, has been performed by the common consent of society, without government.

For upwards of two years from the commencement of the American War, and to a longer period in several of the American States, there were no established forms of government. The old governments had been abolished, and the

country was too much occupied in defence to employ its attention in establishing new governments; yet during this interval order and harmony were preserved as inviolate as in any country in Europe. There is a natural aptness in man, and more so in society, because it embraces a greater variety of abilities and resources, to accommodate itself to whatever situation it is in. The instant formal government is abolished, society begins to act: a general association takes place, and common interest produces common security.

So far is it from being true, as has been pretended, that the abolition of any formal government is the dissolution of society, that it acts by a contrary impulse, and brings the latter the closer together. All that part of its organization which it had committed to its government, devolves again upon itself, and acts through its medium. When men, as well from natural instinct as from reciprocal benefits, have habituated themselves to social and civilised life, there is always enough of its principles in practice to carry them through any changes they may find necessary or convenient to make in their government. In short, man is so naturally a creature of society that it is almost impossible to put him out of it.

Formal government makes but a small part of civilised life; and when even the best that human wisdom can devise is established, it is a thing more in name and idea than in fact. It is to the great and fundamental principles of society and civilisation—to the common usage universally consented to, and mutually and reciprocally maintained—to the unceasing circulation of interest, which, passing through its million channels, invigorates the whole mass of civilised man—it is to these things, infinitely more than to anything

which even the best instituted government can perform, that the safety and prosperity of the individual and of the whole depends.

The more perfect civilisation is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more it does regulate its own affairs, and govern itself; but so contrary is the practice of old governments to the reason of the case, that the expenses of them increase in the proportion they ought to diminish. It is but few general laws that civilised life requires, and those of such common usefulness, that whether they are enforced by the forms of government or not, the effect will be nearly the same. If we consider what the principles are that first condense men into society, and what the motives that regulate their mutual intercourse afterwards, we shall find, by the time we arrive at what is called government, that nearly the whole of the business is performed by the natural operation of the parts upon each other.

Man, with respect to all those matters, is more a creature of consistency than he is aware, or than governments would wish him to believe. All the great laws of society are laws of nature. Those of trade and commerce, whether with respect to the intercourse of individuals or of nations, are laws of mutual and reciprocal interests. They are followed and obeyed, because it is the interest of the parties so to do, and not on account of any formal laws their governments may impose or interpose.

But how often is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by par-

tialities of favour and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought to prevent.

If we look back to the riots and tumults which at various times have happened in England, we shall find that they did not proceed from the want of a government, but that government was itself the generating cause: instead of consolidating society it divided it; it deprived it of its natural cohesion, and engendered discontents and disorders which otherwise would not have existed. In those associations, which men promiscuously form for the purpose of trade, or of any concern in which government is totally out of the question, and in which they act merely on the principles of society, we see how naturally the various parties unite; and this shows, by comparison, that governments, so far from being always the cause or means of order, are often the destruction of it. The riots of 1780¹ had no other source than the remains of those prejudices which the Government of itself had encouraged. But with respect to England there are also other causes.

Excess and inequality of taxation, however disguised in the means, never fail to appear in their effects. As a great mass of the community are thrown thereby into poverty and discontent, they are constantly on the brink of commotion; and deprived, as they unfortunately are, of the means of information, are easily heated to outrage. Whatever the apparent cause of any riots may be, the real one is always want of happiness. It shows that something is wrong in the system of government that injures the felicity by which society is to be preserved.

¹ The George Gordon riots.

But as fact is superior to reasoning, the instance of America presents itself to confirm these observations. If there is a country in the world where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up as it is of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable; but by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires, and all the parts are brought into cordial unison. There the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. Industry is not mortified by the splendid extravagance of a Court rioting at its expense. Their taxes are few, because their government is just: and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults.

A metaphysical man, like Mr. Burke,¹ would have tortured his invention to discover how such a people could be governed. He would have supposed that some must be managed by fraud, others by force, and all by some contrivance; that genius must be hired to impose upon ignorance, and show and parade to fascinate the vulgar. Lost in the abundance of his researches, he would have resolved and re-resolved, and finally overlooked the plain and easy road that lay directly before him.

One of the great advantages of the American Revolution has been, that it led to a discovery of the principles, and laid open the imposition of governments. All the Revo-

¹ Edmund Burke, author of *Reflections on the French Revolution*, to which Paine's book is a reply.

lutions till then had been worked within the small sphere of a Court, and never on the great floor of a Nation. The parties were always of the class of courtiers; and whatever was their rage for reformation, they carefully preserved the fraud of the profession.

In all cases they took care to represent government as a thing made up of mysteries, which only themselves understood; and they hid from the understanding of the Nation the only thing that was beneficial to know, namely, *that government is nothing more than a national association acting on the principles of society.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMAS

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

From the *Lectures on Shakespeare*, 1818.

Full of the then new romantic fervor, Coleridge sought to present Shakespeare to the world in a new light. The lecture which follows is therefore aimed to strike the key note of Shakespeare's genius. Modern scholarship has seen fit to alter very little of Coleridge's masterful evaluation.

In lectures of which amusement forms a large part of the object, there are some peculiar difficulties. The architect places his foundation out of sight, and the musician tunes his instrument before he makes his appearance; but the lecturer has to try his chords in the presence of the assembly, an operation not likely, indeed, to produce much pleasure, but yet indispensably necessary to a right understanding of the subject to be developed.

Poetry in essence is as familiar to barbarous as to civilized nations. The Laplander and the savage Indian are cheered by it as well as the inhabitants of London and Paris; its spirit takes up and incorporates surrounding materials, as a plant clothes itself with soil and climate, whilst it exhibits the working of a vital principle within, independent of all accidental circumstances. And to judge with fairness of an author's works, we ought to distinguish what is inward and essential from what is outward and circumstantial. It is

essential to poetry that it be simple, and appeal to the elements and primary laws of our nature; that it be sensuous, and by its imagery elicit truth at a flash; that it be impassioned, and be able to move our feelings and awaken our affections. In comparing different poets with each other, we should inquire which have brought into the fullest play our imagination and our reason, or have created the greatest excitement and produced the completest harmony. If we consider great exquisiteness of language and sweetness of meter alone, it is impossible to deny to Pope the character of a delightful writer; but whether he be a poet must depend upon our definition of the word; and doubtless, if everything that pleases be poetry, Pope's satires and epistles must be poetry. This I must say, that poetry, as distinguished from other modes of composition, does not rest in meter, and that it is not poetry if it make no appeal to our passions or our imagination. One character belongs to all true poets, that they write from a principle within, not originating in anything without; and that the true poet's work in its form, its shapings, and its modifications, is distinguished from all other works that assume to belong to the class of poetry, as a natural from an artificial flower, or as the mimic garden of a child from an enameled meadow. In the former the flowers are broken from their stems and stuck into the ground; they are beautiful to the eye and fragrant to the sense, but their colors soon fade, and their odor is transient as the smile of the planter; while the meadow may be visited again and again with renewed delight; its beauty is innate in the soil, and its bloom is of the freshness of nature.

The next ground of critical judgment, and point of comparison, will be as to how far a given poet has been in-

fluenced by accidental circumstances. As a living poet must surely write, not for the ages past, but for that in which he lives, and those which are to follow, it is, on the one hand, natural that he should not violate, and on the other, necessary that he should not depend on, the mere manners and modes of his day. See how little does Shakespeare leave us to regret that he was born in his particular age!

I have said, and I say it again, that great as was the genius of Shakespeare, his judgment was at least equal to it. Of this any one will be convinced, who attentively considers those points in which the dramas of Greece and England differ, from the dissimilitude of circumstances by which each was modified and influenced. The Greek stage had its origin in the ceremonies of a sacrifice, such as of the goat to Bacchus, whom we most erroneously regard as merely the jolly god of wine;—for among the ancients he was venerable, as the symbol of that power which acts without our consciousness in the vital energies of nature,—the *vinum mundi*,¹—as Apollo was that of the conscious agency of our intellectual being. The heroes of old under the influences of this Bacchic enthusiasm performed more than human actions;—hence tales of the favorite champions soon passed into dialogue. On the Greek stage the chorus was always before the audience; the curtain was never dropped, as we should say; and change of place being therefore, in general, impossible, the absurd notion of condemning it merely as improbable in itself was never entertained by any one. If we can believe ourselves at Thebes in one act, we may believe ourselves at Athens in the next. If a story lasts twenty-four hours or twenty-four years, it is equally improbable. There

¹ Wine of the world.

seems to be no just boundary but what the feelings prescribe. But on the Greek stage where the same persons were perpetually before the audience, great judgment was necessary in venturing on any such change. The poets never, therefore, attempted to impose on the senses by bringing places to men, but they did bring men to places, as in the well known instance in the *Eumenides*,¹ where, during an evident retirement of the chorus from the orchestra, the scene is changed to Athens, and Orestes² is first introduced in the temple of Minerva, and the chorus of Furies come in afterwards in pursuit of him.

In the Greek drama there were no formal divisions into scenes and acts; there were no means, therefore, of allowing for the necessary lapse of time between one part of the dialogue and another, and unity of time in a strict sense was, of course, impossible. To overcome that difficulty of accounting for time, which is effected on the modern stage by dropping a curtain, the judgment and great genius of the ancients supplied music and measured motion, and with the lyric ode filled up the vacuity. In the story of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, the capture of Troy is supposed to be announced by a fire lighted on the Asiatic shore and the transmission of the signal by successive beacons to Mycenae. The signal is first seen at the 21st line, and the herald from Troy itself enters at 486th, and Agamemnon himself at the 783rd line. But the practical absurdity of this was not felt by the audience, who, in imagination stretched the minutes into hours, while they listened to the lofty narrative odes

¹ By Aeschylus.

² Son of Agamemnon, he slew his mother and Aegisthus, her lover, for their murder of his father.

of the chorus which almost entirely filled up the interspace. Another fact deserves attention here, namely, that regularly on the Greek stage a drama, or acted story, consisted in reality of three dramas, called together a trilogy, and performed consecutively in the course of one day. Now you may conceive a tragedy of Shakespeare's as a trilogy connected in one single representation. Divide *Lear* into three parts, and each would be a play with the ancients; or take the three Aeschylean dramas of *Agamemnon*,¹ and divide them into, or call them, as many acts, and they together would be one play. The first act would comprise the usurpation of Aegisthus and the murder of Agamemnon; the second, the revenge of Orestes and the murder of his mother; and the third, the penance and absolution of Orestes;—occupying a period of twenty-two years.

The stage in Shakespeare's time was a naked room with a blanket for a curtain; but he made it a field for monarchs. That law of unity, which has its foundations, not in the factitious necessity of custom, but in nature itself, the unity of feeling, is everywhere and at all times observed by Shakespeare in his plays. Read *Romeo and Juliet*: all is youth and spring; youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; spring with its odors, its flowers, and its transiency. It is one and the same feeling that commences, goes through, and ends the play. The old men, the Capulets and the Montagues, are not common old men; they have an eagerness, a heartiness, a vehemence, the effect of spring; with Romeo, his change of passion, his sudden marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of youth; whilst in Juliet, love has all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that

¹ *Agamemnon*, *Choephorai*, and *Eumenides*.

is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring; but it ends with a long deep sigh like the last breeze of the Italian evening. This unity of feeling and character pervades every drama of Shakespeare.

It seems to me that his plays are distinguished from those of all other dramatic poets by the following characteristics:

1. Expectation in preference to surprise. It is like the true reading of the passage: "God said, Let there be light, and there was *light*"; not there *was* light. As the feeling with which we startle at a shooting star compared with that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established moment, such and so low is surprise compared with expectation.

2. Signal adherence to the great law of nature, that all opposites tend to attract and temper each other. Passion in Shakespeare generally displays libertinism, but involves morality; and if there are exceptions to this, they are—independently of their intrinsic value—all of them indicative of individual character, and, like the farewell admonitions of a parent, have an end beyond the parental relation. Thus the Countess's beautiful precepts to Bertram,¹ by elevating her character, raise that of Helena her favourite, and soften down the point in her which Shakespeare does not mean us not to see, but to see and to forgive, and at length to justify. And so it is in Polonius, who is the personified memory of wisdom no longer actually possessed. This admirable character is always misrepresented on the stage. Shakespeare never intended to exhibit him as a buffoon; for although it was natural that Hamlet—a young man of fire and genius, detesting formality, and disliking Polonius on political

¹ *All's Well*, Act I, Sc. i.

grounds, as imagining that he had assisted his uncle in his usurpation—should express himself satirically, yet this must not be taken as exactly the poet's conception of him. In Polonius a certain induration of character had arisen from long habits of business; but take his advice to Laertes, and Ophelia's reverence for his memory, and we shall see that he was meant to be represented as a statesman somewhat past his faculties,—his recollections of life all full of wisdom, and showing a knowledge of human nature, whilst what immediately takes place before him, and escapes from him, is indicative of weakness. But as in Homer all the deities are in armour, even Venus, so in Shakespeare all the characters are strong. Hence real folly and dulness are made by him the vehicles of wisdom. There is no difficulty for one being a fool to imitate a fool; but to be, remain, and speak like a wise man and a great wit, and yet so as to give a vivid representation of a veritable fool, *hic labor, hoc opus est*.¹ A drunken constable is not uncommon, nor hard to draw; but see and examine what goes to make up a Dogberry.²

3. Keeping at all times in the high road of life. Shakespeare has no innocent adulteries, no interesting incests, no virtuous vice; he never renders that amiable which religion and reason alike teach us to detest, or clothes impurity in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher, the Kotzebues³ of the day. Shakespeare's fathers are roused by ingratitude, his husbands stung by unfaithfulness; in him, in short, the affections are wounded in those points in which all may—nay, must—feel. Let the morality of Shakespeare

¹ This is the labor, this is the work.

² In *Much Ado*.

³ Kotzebue was a popular German dramatist.

be contrasted with that of the writers of his own or the succeeding age, or of those of the present day, who boast their superiority in this respect. No one can dispute that the result of such a comparison is altogether in favour of Shakespeare; even the letters of women of high rank in his age were often coarser than his writings. If he occasionally disgusts a keen sense of delicacy, he never injures the mind; he neither excites nor flatters passion, in order to degrade the subject of it; he does not use the faulty thing for a faulty purpose, nor carries on warfare against virtue by causing wickedness to appear as no wickedness, through the medium of a morbid sympathy with the unfortunate. In Shakespeare vice never walks as in twilight; nothing is purposely out of place; he inverts not the order of nature and propriety,—does not make every magistrate a drunkard or glutton, nor every poor man meek, humane, and temperate; he has no benevolent butchers, or sentimental rat-catchers.

4. Independence of the dramatic interest on the plot. The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not *vice versa*, as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more. Hence arises the true justification of the same stratagem being used in regard to Benedick and Beatrice,—the vanity in each being alike. Take away from the *Much Ado about Nothing* all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades, forced into the service when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action; take away Benedict, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero, and what will remain? In other writers the main

agent of the plot is always the prominent character; in Shakespeare it is so, or is not so, as the character is in itself calculated, or not calculated, to form the plot. Don John is the main-spring of the plot of this play; but he is merely shown and then withdrawn.

5. Independence of the interest on the story as the groundwork of the plot. Hence Shakespeare never took the trouble of inventing stories. It was enough for him to select from those that had been already invented or recorded such as had one or other, or both, of two recommendations, namely, suitability to his particular purpose, and their being parts of popular tradition—names of which we had often heard, and of their fortunes, and as to which all we wanted was, to see the man himself. So it is just the man himself, the Lear, the Shylock, the Richard, that Shakespeare makes us for the first time acquainted with. Omit the first scene in *Lear*, and yet everything will remain; so the first and second scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*. Indeed it is universally true.

6. Interfusion of the lyrical (that which in its very essence is poetical) not only with the dramatic, as in the plays of Metastasio,¹ where at the end of the scenes comes the *aria* as the *exit* speech of the character, but also in and through the dramatic. Songs in Shakespeare are introduced as songs only, just as songs are in real life, beautifully as some of them are characteristic of the person who has sung or called for them, as Desdemona's "Willow,"² and Ophelia's wild snatches, and the sweet carollings in *As You Like It*. But the whole of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is one

¹ An 18th century Italian.

² Song in *Othello*, Act IV, Sc. iii.

continued specimen of the dramatized lyrical. And observe how exquisitely the dramatic of Hotspur:

*Marry and I'm glad on't with all my heart;
I'd rather be a kitten and cry mew, &c.*

melts away into the lyric of Mortimer:

*I understand thy looks: that pretty Welsh
Which thou pour'st down from these swelling heavens
I am too perfect in, &c.*

1 Henry IV, III, i

7. The characters of the *dramatis personae*, like those in real life, are to be inferred by the reader; they are not told to him. And it is well worth remarking that Shakespeare's characters, like those in real life, are very commonly misunderstood, and almost always understood by different persons in different ways. The causes are the same in either case. If you take only what the friends of the character say, you may be deceived, and still more so, if that which his enemies say; nay, even the character himself sees through the medium of his character, and not exactly as he is. Take all together, not omitting a shrewd hint from the clown, or the fool, and perhaps your impression will be right; and you may know whether you have in fact discovered the poet's own idea, by all the speeches receiving light from it, and at-testing its reality by reflecting it.

Lastly, in Shakespeare the heterogeneous is united, as it is in nature. You must not suppose a pressure or passion always acting on or in the character. Passion in Shakespeare

is that by which the individual is distinguished from others, not that which makes a different kind of him. Shakespeare followed the main march of the human affections. He entered into no analysis of the passions or faiths of men, but assured himself that such and such passions and faiths were grounded in our common nature, and not in the mere accidents of ignorance or disease. This is an important consideration and constitutes our Shakespeare the morning star, the guide and the pioneer, of true philosophy.

OLD CHINA

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834)

From *The London Magazine*, March, 1823.

Into his informal essays Lamb poured the riches of his personality. He loved people, he loved books, he loved living; and over the years he acquired a discriminating sense of values. In "Old China" he chats of some of the things that have made life worth while.

I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have?—to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china tea-cup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous art-

ist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on tea-cups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream!

Farther on—if far or near can be predicted of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant, and co-extensive—so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon) some of these *speciosa miracula*¹ upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to overshadow the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.²

“I wish the good old times would come again,” she said,

¹ Brilliant wonders.

² Lamb's sister Mary.

“when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state”—so she was pleased to ramble on,—“in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!)—we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

“Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so thread-bare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker’s in Covent-garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o’clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bed-wards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till day-break—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and

are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical—give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that over-worn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

“When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Lionardo, which we christened the ‘Lady Blanch’;¹ when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now, you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi’s, and buy a wilderness of Lionardos. Yet do you?

“Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter’s Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holyday—holydays, and all other fun, are gone, now we are rich—and the little handbasket in which I used to deposit our day’s fare of savoury cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noon-tide for some decent house, where we might go in, and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a table-cloth—and wish for such another honest hostess as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant

¹ The picture was “Modesty and Vanity.” The Lambs renamed it in fun because Mary had written a poem about it.

banks of the Lea, when he went a-fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savourily, scarcely grudging Piscator¹ his Trout Hall? Now—when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom; moreover, we *ride* part of the way, and go into a fine inn, and order the best dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome.

“You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the *Battle of Hexham*, and the *Surrender of Calais*,² and *Bannister and Mrs. Bland in the Children in the Wood*³—when we squeezed out our shillings a-piece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with *Rosalind in Arden*, or with *Viola at the Court of Illyria*? You used to say, that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially—that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were

¹ The fisherman in Walton's *Compleat Angler*.

² Plays by George Colman.

³ By Thomas Morton.

obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then—and I appeal to you, whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accomodation than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in, indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases was bad enough,—but there was still a law of civility to women recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat, and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

“There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at, that makes what I call a treat—when two people living together, as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologises, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never do make much of ourselves. None but the poor

can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

“I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet,—and much ado we used to have every Thirty-first Night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then, betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now) we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with ‘lusty brimmers’ (as you used to quote it out of *heartly cheerful Mr. Cotton*,¹ as you called him), we used to welcome in the ‘coming guest.’ Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us.”

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor — hundred pounds a year. “It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to

¹ Charles Cotton, a 17th century poet.

be most thankful. It strengthened, and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten—with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth; a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride, where we formerly walked: live better, and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fire-side, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient stair-cases, pushed about, and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theatre down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Croesus had, or the great Jew R——¹ is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed-tester, over the head of that pretty insipid half Madonna-ish chit of a lady in that very blue summer-house.”

¹ Nathan Rothschild.

LABOR

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)

From *Past and Present*, Book III, Ch. XI, 1843.

Carlyle's corrective for the confusion, suffering, and despair of his age was work. With his peculiar vigorous style he challenges heroic man to burst through the obstacles and win a new world.

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish, mean, *is* in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself': long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work'; a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle

and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labor in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!

Destiny, on the whole, has no other way of cultivating us. A formless Chaos, once set it *revolving*, grows round and ever rounder; ranges itself, by mere force of gravity, into strata, spherical courses; is no longer a Chaos, but a round compacted World. What would become of the Earth, did she cease to revolve? In the poor old Earth, so long as she revolves, all inequalities, irregularities disperse themselves; all irregularities are incessantly becoming regular. Hast thou looked on the Potter's wheel,—one of the venerablest objects; old as the Prophet Ezekiel¹ and far older? Rude lumps of clay, how they spin themselves up, by mere quick whirling, into beautiful circular dishes. And fancy the most assiduous Potter, but without his wheel; reduced to make dishes or rather amorphous botches, by mere kneading and baking! Even such a Potter were Destiny, with a human soul that would rest and lie at ease, that would not work and spin! Of an idle unrevolving man the kindest Destiny, like the most assiduous Potter without wheel, can

¹ Not in Ezekiel, but Jeremiah, 18: 1-6.

bake and knead nothing other than a botch; let her spend on him what expensive coloring, what gilding and enameling she will, he is but a botch. Not a dish; no, a bulging, kneaded, crooked, shambling, squint-cornered, amorphous botch,—a mere enameled vessel of dishonor! Let the idle think of this.

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows;—draining-off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and *its* value be great or small! Labor is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness,—to all knowledge, 'self-knowledge' and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. Knowledge? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that; for Nature herself accredits that, says Yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working: the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. 'Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone.'

And again, hast thou valued Patience, Courage, Perseverance, Openness to light; readiness to own thyself mistaken,

to do better next time? All these, all virtues, in wrestling with the dim brute Powers of Fact, in ordering of thy fellows in such wrestle, there and elsewhere not at all, thou wilt continually learn. Set down a brave Sir Christopher¹ in the middle of black ruined Stone-heaps, of foolish unarchitectural Bishops, redtape Officials, idle Nell-Gwyn Defenders of the Faith;² and see whether he will ever raise a Paul's Cathedral out of all that, yea or no! Rough, rude, contradictory are all things and persons, from the mutinous masons and Irish hodmen, up to the idle Nell-Gwyn Defenders, to blustering redtape Officials, foolish unarchitectural Bishops. All these things and persons are there not for Christopher's sake and his Cathedral's; they are there for their own sake mainly! Christopher will have to conquer and constrain all these,—if he be able. All these are against him. Equitable Nature herself, who carries her mathematics and architectonics not on the face of her, but deep in the hidden heart of her,—Nature herself is but partially for him; will be wholly against him, if he constrain her not! His very money, where is it to come from? The pious munificence of England lies far-scattered, distant, unable to speak, and say, 'I am here';—must be spoken to before it can speak. Pious munificence, and all help, is so silent, invisible like the gods; impediment, contradictions manifold are so loud and near! O brave Sir Christopher, trust thou in those notwithstanding, and front all these; understand all these; by valiant patience, noble effort, insight, by man's-strength, vanquish and compel all these,—and, on the whole, strike down victoriously

¹ Sir Christopher Wren, architect.

² A satirical allusion to immoral kings who held the title. Nell Gwyn was the mistress of Charles II.

the last topstone of that Paul's Edifice; thy monument for certain centuries, the stamp "Great Man" impressed very legibly on Portland-stone there!

Yes, all manner of help, and pious response from Men or Nature, is always what we call silent; cannot speak or come to light, till it be seen, till it be spoken to. Every noble work is at first "impossible." In very truth, for every noble work the possibilities will lie diffused through Immensity; inarticulate, undiscoverable except to faith. Like Gideon thou shalt spread out thy fleece at the door of thy tent;¹ see whether under the wide arch of Heaven there be any bounteous moisture, or none. Thy heart and life-purpose shall be as a miraculous Gideon's fleece, spread out in silent appeal to Heaven: and from the kind Immensities, what from the poor unkind Localities and town and country Parishes there never could, blessed dew-moisture to suffice thee shall have fallen!

Work is of a religious nature:—work is of a *brave* nature; which it is the aim of all religion to be. All work of man is as the swimmer's: a waste ocean threatens to devour him; if he front it not bravely, it will keep its word. By incessant wise defiance of it, lusty rebuke and buffet of it, behold how it loyally supports him, bears him as its conqueror along. "It is so," says Goethe, "with all things that man undertakes in this world."

Brave Sea-captain, Norse Sea-king,—Columbus, my hero, royalest Sea-king of all! it is no friendly environment this of thine, in the waste deep waters; around thee mutinous discouraged souls, behind thee disgrace and ruin, before thee

¹ If the fleece gathered dew and the ground was dry, or *vice versa*, Gideon knew that God would help him. Judges 6: 36-38.

the unpenetrated veil of Night. Brother, these wild water-mountains, bounding from their deep bases (ten miles deep, I am told) are not entirely there on thy behalf! Meseems *they* have other work than floating thee forward:—and the huge Winds, that sweep from Ursa Major to the Tropics and Equators, dancing their giant-waltz through the kingdoms of Chaos and Immensity, they care little about filling rightly or filling wrongly the small shoulder-of-mutton sails in this cockle-skiff of thine! Thou art not among articulate-speaking friends, my brother; thou art among immeasurable dumb monsters, tumbling, howling wide as the world here. Secret, far off, invisible to all hearts but thine, there lies a help in them: see how thou wilt get at that. Patiently thou wilt wait till the mad Southwester spend itself, saving thyself by dextrous science of defence, the while: valiantly, with swift decision, wilt thou strike in, when the favouring East, the Possible, springs up. Mutiny of men thou wilt sternly repress; weakness, despondency, thou wilt cheerily encourage: thou wilt swallow down complaint, unreason, weariness, weakness of others and thyself;—how much wilt thou swallow down! There shall be a depth of Silence in thee, deeper than this Sea, which is but ten miles deep: a Silence unsoundable; known to God only. Thou shalt be a Great Man. Yes, my World-Soldier, thou of the World Marine-service,—thou wilt have to be *greater* than this tumultuous unmeasured World here round thee is; thou, in thy strong soul, as with wrestler's arms, shalt embrace it, harness it down; and make it bear thee on,—to new Americas, or whither God wills!

GIFTS¹

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1862)

From *Essays*, 2nd Series, 1844.

The essays of Emerson contain the substance of his transcendental philosophy. "Gifts," although short, yet is typical in that it elevates a material formality to a spiritual plane. It causes one to reconsider the motives which actuate and perpetuate the custom of giving and receiving.

*Gifts of one who loved me,—
'Twas high time they came;
When he ceased to love me,
Time they stopped for shame.*

It is said that the world is in a state of bankruptcy, that the world owes the world more than the world can pay, and ought to go into chancery, and be sold. I do not think this general insolvency, which involves in some sort all the population, to be the reason of the difficulty experienced at Christmas and New Year, and other times, in bestowing gifts; since it is always so pleasant to be generous, though very vexatious to pay debts. But the impediment lies in the choosing. If, at any time, it comes into my head that a present is due from me to somebody, I am puzzled what to give

¹ Used with the courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Co., the authorized publishers.

until the opportunity is gone. Flowers and fruits are always fit presents; flowers, because they are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world. These gay natures contrast with the somewhat stern countenance of ordinary nature; they are like music heard out of a work-house. Nature does not cocker us: we are children, not pets: she is not fond: everything is dealt to us without fear or favor, after severe universal laws. Yet these delicate flowers look like the frolic and interference of love and beauty. Men used to tell us that we love flattery, even though we are not deceived by it, because it shows that we are of importance enough to be courted. Something like that pleasure, the flowers give us: what am I to whom these sweet hints are addressed? Fruits are acceptable gifts, because they are the flower of commodities, and admit of fantastic values being attached to them. If a man should send to me to come a hundred miles to visit him, and should set before me a basket of fine summer-fruit, I should think there was some proportion between the labour and the reward.

For common gifts, necessity makes pertinences¹ and beauty every day, and one is glad when an imperative leaves him no option, since if the man at the door has no shoes you have not to consider whether you could procure him a paint-box. And as it is always pleasing to see a man eat bread, or drink water, in the house or out of doors, so it is always a great satisfaction to supply these first wants. Necessity does everything well. In our condition of universal dependence, it seems heroic to let the petitioner be the judge of his necessity, and to give all that is asked, though at great inconvenience. If it be a fantastic desire, it is better to leave to

¹ Appropriate occasions.

others the office of punishing him. I can think of many parts I should prefer playing to that of the Furies. Next to things of necessity, the rule for a gift, which one of my friends prescribed, is, that we might convey to some person that which properly belonged to his character, and was easily associated with him in thought. But our tokens of compliment and love are for the most part barbarous. Rings and other jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me. Therefore the poet brings his poem; the shepherd, his lamb; the farmer, corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; the girl, a handkerchief of her own sewing. This is right and pleasing, for it restores society in so far to its primary basis, when a man's biography is conveyed in his gift, and every man's wealth is an index of his merit. But it is a cold, lifeless business when you go to the shops to buy me something, which does not represent your life and talent, but a goldsmith's. This is fit for kings, and rich men who represent kings, and a false state of property, to make presents of gold and silver stuffs, as a kind of symbolical sin-offering, or payment of blackmail.

The law of benefits is a difficult channel, which requires careful sailing, or rude boats. It is not the office of a man to receive gifts. How dare you give them? We wish to be self-sustained. We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten. We can receive anything from love, for that is a way of receiving it from ourselves; but not from anyone who assumes to bestow. We sometimes hate the meat which we eat, because there seems something of degrading dependence in living by it.

*"Brother, if Jove to thee a present make,
Take heed that from his hands thou nothing take."*¹

We ask the whole. Nothing less will content us. We arraign society if it do not give us besides earth, and fire, and water, opportunity, love, reverence, and objects of veneration.

He is a good man who can receive a gift well. We are either glad or sorry at a gift, and both emotions are unbecoming. Some violence, I think, is done, some degradation borne, when I rejoice or grieve at a gift. I am sorry when my independence is invaded, or when a gift comes from such as do not know my spirit, and so the act is not supported; and if the gift pleases me overmuch, then I should be ashamed that the donor should read my heart, and see that I love his commodity, and not him. The gift, to be true, must be the flowing of the giver unto me, correspondent to my flowing unto him. When the waters are at a level, then my goods pass to him, and his to me. All his are mine, all mine his. I say to him, "How can you give me this pot of oil, or this flagon of wine, when all your oil and wine is mine?" which belief of mine this gift seems to deny. Hence the fitness of beautiful, not useful things for gifts. This giving is flat usurpation, and therefore when the beneficiary is ungrateful, as all beneficiaries hate all Timons, not at all considering the value of the gift, but looking back to the greater store it was taken from, I rather sympathize with the beneficiary than with the anger of my lord Timon.² For, the expectation of gratitude is mean, and is continually punished

¹ From Hesiod.

² Timon of Athens became a misanthrope when, after he had lavished his wealth upon them, his friends deserted him.

by the total insensibility of the obliged person. It is a great happiness to get off without injury and heart-burning from one who has had the ill luck to be served by you. It is a very onerous business, this of being served, and the debtor naturally wishes to give you a slap. A golden text for these gentlemen is that which I so admire in the Buddhist, who never thanks, and who says, "Do not flatter your benefactors."

The reason of these discords I conceive to be, that there is no commensurability between a man and any gift. You cannot give anything to a magnanimous person. After you have served him, he at once puts you in debt by his magnanimity. The service a man renders his friend is trivial and selfish, compared with the service he knows his friend stood in readiness to yield him, alike before he had begun to serve his friend, and now also. Compared with that goodwill I bear my friend, the benefit it is in my power to render him seems small. Besides, our action on each other, good as well as evil, is so incidental and at random, that we can seldom hear the acknowledgements of any person who would thank us for a benefit without some shame and humiliation. We can rarely strike a direct stroke, but must be content with an oblique one; we seldom have the satisfaction of yielding a direct benefit which is directly received. But rectitude scatters favors on every side without knowing it, and receives with wonder the thanks of all people.

I fear to breathe any treason against the majesty of love, which is the genius and god of gifts and to whom we must not affect to prescribe. Let him give kingdoms or flower leaves indifferently. There are persons from whom we always expect fairy tokens; let us not cease to expect them.

This is prerogative, and not to be limited by our municipal rules. For the rest, I like to see that we cannot be bought and sold. The best of hospitality and of generosity is also not in the will, but in fate. I find that I am not much to you; you do not need me; you do not feel me; then am I thrust out of doors, though you proffer me house and lands. No services are of any value, but only likeness.¹ When I have attempted to join myself to others by services, it proved an intellectual trick—no more. They eat your service like apples, and leave you out. But love them, and they feel you and delight in you all the time.

¹ Affinity of taste and emotion.

LITERATURE OF KNOWLEDGE AND LITERATURE OF POWER

THOMAS DEQUINCEY (1785-1859)

From "Alexander Pope" in *The North British Review*, 1848.

The term "literature" is used so loosely that it is apt to apply to every thing in print. DeQuincey makes a nice distinction between the literature of utility and the *belles lettres*, but it is of course obvious that border line cases might pose difficulties.

What is it that we mean by *literature*? Popularly, and amongst the thoughtless, it is held to include everything that is printed in a book. Little logic is required to disturb *that* definition. The most thoughtless person is easily made aware that in the idea of *literature* one essential element is some relation to a general and common interest of man,—so that what applies only to a local, or professional, or merely personal interest, even though presenting itself in the shape of a book, will not belong to Literature. So far the definition is easily narrowed; and it is as easily expanded. For not only is much that takes a station in books not literature, but inversely, much that really *is* literature never reaches a station in books. The weekly sermons of Christendom, that vast pulpit literature which acts so extensively upon the popular mind—to warn, to uphold, to renew, to comfort, to alarm—does not attain the sanctuary of libraries in the ten-thousandth part of its extent. The drama again,—as, for instance,

the finest part of Shakespeare's plays in England, and all leading Athenian plays in the noontide of the Attic stage,—operated as a literature on the public mind, and were (according to the strictest letter of that term) *published* through the audiences that witnessed their representation some time before they were published as things to be read; and they were published in this scenical mode of publication with much more effect than they could have had as books during ages of costly copying or of costly printing.

Books, therefore, do not suggest an idea coextensive and interchangeable with the idea of literature; since much literature, scenic, forensic, or didactic (as from lecturers and public orators), may never come into books, and much that does come into books may connect itself with no literary interest. But a far more important correction, applicable to the common vague idea of literature, is to be sought not so much in a better definition of literature as in a sharper distinction of the two functions which it fulfils. In that great social organ which, collectively, we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices, that may blend and often do so, but capable, severally, of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*, and secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is to *teach*; the function of the second is to *move*; the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls “dry light”; but proximately it does and must operate—else it

ceases to be a literature of power—on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering iris of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. Men have so little reflected on the higher functions of literature as to find it a paradox if one should describe it as a mean or subordinate purpose of books to give information. But this is a paradox only in the sense which makes it honourable to be paradoxical. Whenever we talk in ordinary language of seeking information or gaining knowledge, we understand the words as connected with something of absolute novelty. But it is the grandeur of all truth which can occupy a very high place in human interests that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds; it exists eternally by way of germ or latent principle in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed, but never to be planted. To be capable of transplantation is the immediate criterion of a truth that ranges on a lower scale. Besides which, there is a rarer thing than truth,—namely *power*, or deep sympathy with truth. What is the effect, for instance, upon society of children? By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration which connect themselves with the helplessness, with the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of heaven—the frailty, for instance, which appeals to forbearance, the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly—are kept up in perpetual remembrance, and their ideals are continually refreshed. A purpose of the same nature is answered by the higher literature, viz. the literature of power. What do you learn from *Paradise Lost*? Nothing at all. What do you

vised, let it be but expanded,—nay, even let its teaching be but placed in a better order,—and instantly it is superseded. Whereas the feeblest works in the literature of power, surviving at all, survive as finished and unalterable amongst men. For instance, the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was a book militant on earth from the first. In all stages of its progress it would have to fight for its existence: first, as regards absolute truth; secondly, when that combat was over, as regards its form or mode of presenting the truth. And as soon as a Laplace, or anybody else, builds higher upon the foundations laid by this book, effectually he throws it out of the sunshine into decay and darkness; by weapons won from this book he superannuates and destroys this book, so that soon the name of Newton remains as a mere *nominis umbra*,¹ but his book, as a living power, has transmigrated into other forms. Now, on the contrary, the *Iliad*, the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, the *Othello* or *King Lear*, the *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, and the *Paradise Lost*, are not militant, but triumphant for ever, as long as the languages exist in which they speak or can be taught to speak. They never *can* transmigrate into new incarnations. To reproduce these in new forms, or variations, even if in some things they should be improved, would be to plagiarize. A good steam-engine is properly superseded by a better. But one lovely pastoral valley is not superseded by another, nor a statue of Praxiteles by a statue of Michael Angelo. These are separated not by imparity, but by disparity. They are not thought of as unequal under the same standard, but as different in *kind*, and, if otherwise equal, as equal under a different standard. Human works of immortal beauty and works of nature in one respect stand

¹ Shadow of a name.

on the same footing: they never absolutely repeat each other, never approach so near as not to differ, and they differ not as better and worse, or simply by more and less,—they differ by undecipherable and incommunicable differences, that cannot be caught by mimicries, that cannot be reflected in the mirror of copies, that cannot become ponderable in the scales of vulgar comparison. . . . At this hour, five hundred years since their creation, the tales of Chaucer, never equalled on this earth for their tenderness and for life of picturesqueness, are read familiarly by many in the charming language of their natal day, and by others in the modernizations of Dryden, of Pope, and Wordsworth. At this hour, one thousand eight hundred years since their creation, the pagan tales of Ovid, never equalled on this earth for the gaiety of their movement and the capricious graces of their narrative, are read by all Christendom. This man's people and their monuments are dust, but *he* is alive; he has survived them, as he told us that he had it in his commission to do, by a thousand years, "and shall a thousand more."

All the literature of knowledge builds only ground-nests, that are swept away by floods, or confounded by the plough; but the literature of power builds nests in ærial altitudes of temples sacred from violation, or of forests inaccessible to fraud. This is a great prerogative of the *power* literature, and it is a greater which lies in the mode of its influence. The *knowledge* literature, like the fashion of this world, passeth away. An encyclopædia is its abstract; and, in this respect, it may be taken for its speaking symbol,—that before one generation has passed an encyclopædia is superannuated; for it speaks through the dead memory and unimpassioned understanding, which have not the repose of

higher faculties, but are continually enlarging and varying their phylacteries. But all literature properly so called—literature κατ' ἐξοχην¹—for the very reason that it is so much more durable than the literature of knowledge, is (and by the very same proportion it is) more intense and electrically searching in its impressions. The directions in which the tragedy of this planet has trained our human feelings to play, and the combinations into which the poetry of this planet has thrown our human passions of love and hatred, of admiration and contempt, exercise a power for bad or good over human life that cannot be contemplated, when stretching through many generations, without a sentiment allied to awe. And of this let every one be assured—that he owes to the impassioned books which he has read many a thousand more of emotions than he can consciously trace back to them. Dim by their origination, these emotions yet arise in him, and mould him through life, like forgotten incidents of his childhood. . . .

¹ Par excellence.

THE DARK MIRROR

JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

From *Modern Painters*, Vol. V., Pt. IX, Ch. 1, 1860.

Ruskin never doubted that art was linked to morality and religion. He believed that art without human sympathy was meaningless and that human emotion, in turn, was a reflection of the Divine. Those who believe in art for art's sake will find here a counter theory.

The essential connection of the power of landscape with human emotion is not less certain, because in many impressive pictures the link is slight or local. That the connection should exist at a single point is all that we need. The comparison with the dress of the body may be carried out into the extremest parallelism. It may often happen that no part of the figure wearing the dress is discernible, nevertheless, the perceivable fact that the drapery is worn by a figure makes all the difference. In one of the most sublime figures in the world this is actually so: one of the fainting Marys in Tintoret's *Crucifixion* has cast her mantle over her head, and her face is lost in its shade, and her whole figure veiled in folds of gray. But what the difference is between that gray woof, that gathers round her as she falls, and the same folds cast in a heap upon the ground, that difference, and more, exists between the power of Nature through which humanity is seen, and her power in the desert. Desert—whether of leaf or sand—true desertness is not in the want of leaves, but of life. Where humanity is not, and was not, the best natural

beauty is more than vain. It is even terrible; not as the dress cast aside from the body but as an embroidered shroud hiding a skeleton.

And on each side of a right feeling in this matter there lie, as usual, two opposite errors.

The first, that of caring for man only; and for the rest of the universe, little, or not at all, which, in a measure, was the error of the Greeks and Florentines; the other, that of caring for the universe only; for man, not at all, which, in a measure, is the error of modern science, and of the Art connecting itself with such science.

The degree of power which any man may ultimately possess in landscape-painting will depend finally on his perception of this influence. If he has to paint the desert, its awfulness—if the garden, its gladsomeness—will arise simply and only from his sensibility to the story of life. Without this he is nothing but a scientific mechanist; this, though it cannot make him yet a painter, raises him to the sphere in which he may become one. Nay, the mere shadow and semblance of this have given dangerous power to works in all other respects unnoticeable; and the least degree of its true presence has given value to work in all other respects vain.

The true presence, observe, of sympathy with the spirit of man. Where this is not, sympathy with any higher spirit is impossible.

For the directest manifestation of Deity to man is in His own image, that is, in man.

“In his own image. After his likeness.” *Ad imaginem et similitudinem Suam*. I do not know what people in general understand by those words. I suppose they ought to be

understood. The truth they contain seems to lie at the foundation of our knowledge both of God and man; yet do we not usually pass the sentence by, in dull reverence, attaching no definite sense to it at all? For all practical purpose, might it not as well be out of the text?

I have no time, nor much desire, to examine the vague expressions of belief with which the verse has been encumbered. Let us try to find its only possible plain significance.

It cannot be supposed that the bodily shape of man resembles, or resembled, any bodily shape in Deity. The likeness must therefore be, or have been, in the soul. Had it wholly passed away, and the Divine soul been altered into a soul brutal or diabolic, I suppose we should have been told of the change. But we are told nothing of the kind. The verse still stands as if for our use and trust. It was only death which was to be our punishment. Not *change*. So far as we live, the image is still there; defiled, if you will; broken, if you will; all but effaced, if you will, by death and the shadow of it. But not changed. We are not made now in any other image than God's. There are, indeed, the two states of this image—the earthly and heavenly, but both Adamite, both human, both the same likeness; only one defiled, and one pure. So that the soul of man is still a mirror, wherein may be seen, darkly, the image of the mind of God.

These may seem daring words. I am sorry that they do; but I am helpless to soften them. Discover any other meaning of the text if you are able;—but be sure that it *is* a meaning—a meaning in your head and heart;—not a subtle gloss, nor a shifting of one verbal expression into another, both idea-less. I repeat, that, to me, the verse has, and can have, no other signification than this—that the soul of man is a

mirror of the mind of God. A mirror dark, distorted, broken, use what blameful words you please of its state; yet in the main, a true mirror, out of which alone, and by which alone, we can know anything of God at all.

"How?" the reader, perhaps, answers indignantly. "I know the nature of God by revelation, not by looking into myself."

Revelation to what? To a nature incapable of receiving truth? That cannot be; for only to a nature capable of truth, desirous of it, distinguishing it, feeding upon it, revelation is possible. To a being undesirous of it, and hating it, revelation is impossible. There can be none to a brute, or fiend. In so far, therefore, as you love truth, and live therein, in so far revelation can exist for you;—and in so far, your mind is the image of God's.

But consider farther, not only *to* what, but *by* what, is the revelation. By sight? or word? If by sight, then to eyes which see justly. Otherwise, no sight would be revelation. So far, then, as your sight is just, it is the image of God's sight.

If by words—how do you know their meanings? Here is a short piece of precious word revelation, for instance. "God is love."

Love! yes. But what *is that*? The revelation does not tell you that, I think. Look into the mirror, and you will see. Out of your own heart you may know what love is. In no other possible way—by no other help or sign. All the words and sounds ever uttered, all the revelations of cloud, or flame, or crystal, are utterly powerless. They cannot tell you, in the smallest point, what love means. Only the broken mirror can.

Here is more revelation. "God is just!" Just! What is that? The revelation cannot help you to discover. You say it is dealing equitably or equally. But how do you discern the equality? Not by inequality of mind; not by a mind incapable of weighing, judging, or distributing. If the lengths seem unequal in the broken mirror, for you they are unequal; but if they seem equal, then the mirror is true. So far as you recognize equality, and your conscience tells you what is just, so far your mind is the image of God's: and so far as you do *not* discern this nature of justice or equality, the words "God is just" bring no revelation to you.

"But his thoughts are not as our thoughts." No: the sea is not as the standing pool by the wayside. Yet when the breeze crisps the pool, you may see the image of the breakers, and a likeness of the foam. Nay, in some sort, the same foam. If the sea is for ever invisible to you, something you may learn of it from the pool. Nothing, assuredly, any otherwise.

"But this poor miserable Me! Is *this*, then, all the book I have got to read about God in?" Yes, truly so. No other book, nor fragment of book, than that, will you ever find;—no velvet-bound missal, nor frankincensed manuscript;—nothing hieroglyphic nor cuneiform; papyrus and pyramid are alike silent on this matter;—nothing in the clouds above, nor in the earth beneath. That flesh-bound volume is the only revelation that is, that was, or that can be. In that is the image of God painted; in that is the law of God written; in that is the promise of God revealed. Know thyself; for through thyself only thou canst know God.

Through the glass, darkly. But, except through the glass, in nowise.

A tremulous crystal, waved as water, poured out upon the ground;—you may defile it, despise it, pollute it at your pleasure, and at your peril; for on the peace of those weak waves must all the heaven you shall ever gain be first seen; and through such purity as you can win for those dark waves, must all the light of the risen Sun of righteousness be bent down, by faint refraction. Cleanse them, and calm them, as you love your life.

Therefore it is that all the power of nature depends on subjection to the human soul. Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun. The fire of his wonderful heart is the only light and heat worth gauge or measure. Where he is, are the tropics; where he is not, the ice-world.

LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE¹

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

From the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1863.

Thoreau would rather go to jail or live alone in the woods than truckle to conventions which undermined the integrity of his individual self. A one-man revolution is frequently ill advised, but not so for Thoreau.

At a lyceum, not long since, I felt that the lecturer had chosen a theme too foreign to himself, and so failed to interest me as much as he might have done. He described things not in or near to his heart, but toward his extremities and superficialities. There was, in this sense, no truly central or centralizing thought in the lecture. I would have had him deal with his privatest experience, as the poet does. The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what *I thought*, and attended to my answer. I am surprised, as well as delighted, when this happens, it is such a rare use he would make of me, as if he were acquainted with the tool. Commonly, if men want anything of me, it is only to know how many acres I make of their land,—since I am a surveyor,—or, at most, what trivial news I have burdened myself with. They never will go to law for my meat; they prefer the shell. A man once came a considerable distance to ask me to lecture on Slavery; but on conversing with him,

¹ Used with the courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Co., the authorized publishers.

I found that he and his clique expected seven eighths of the lecture to be theirs, and only one eighth mine; so I declined. I take it for granted, when I am invited to lecture anywhere,—for I have had a little experience in that business,—that there is a desire to hear what *I think* on some subject, though I may be the greatest fool in the country,—and not that I should say pleasant things merely, or such as the audience will assent to; and I resolve, accordingly, that I will give them a strong dose of myself. They have sent for me, and engaged to pay for me, and I am determined that they shall have me, though I bore them beyond all precedent.

So now I would say something similar to you, my readers. Since *you* are my readers, and I have not been much of a traveller, I will not talk about people a thousand miles off but come as near home as I can. As the time is short, I will leave out all the flattery, and retain all the criticism.

Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.

This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! I am awaked almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blank-book to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents. An Irishman, seeing me making a minute in the fields, took it for granted that I was calculating my wages. If a man was tossed out of a window when an infant, and so made a cripple for life, or scared out of his wits by the Indians, it is regretted chiefly because he was thus incapacitated for—business! I think that there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business.

There is a coarse and boisterous money-making fellow in the outskirts of our town, who is going to build a bank-wall under the hill along the edge of his meadow. The powers have put this into his head to keep him out of mischief, and he wishes me to spend three weeks digging there with him. The result will be that he will perhaps get some more money to hoard, and leave for his heirs to spend foolishly. If I do this, most will commend me as an industrious and hard-working man; but if I choose to devote myself to certain labors which yield more real profit, though but little money, they may be inclined to look on me as an idler. Nevertheless, as I do not need the police of meaningless labor to regulate me, and do not see anything absolutely praiseworthy in this fellow's undertaking any more than in many an enterprise of our own or foreign governments, however amusing it may be to him or them, I prefer to finish my education at a different school.

If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!

Most men would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now. For instance: just after sunrise one summer morning I noticed one of my neighbors walking beside his team, which was slowly drawing a heavy hewn stone swung under the axle, surrounded by an atmosphere of industry—his day's work

begun, his brow commenced to sweat, a reproach to all sluggards and idlers—pausing abreast the shoulders of his oxen, and half turning round with a flourish of his merciful whip, while they gained their length on him. And I thought, Such is the labor which the American Congress exists to protect,—honest, manly toil,—honest as the day is long,—that makes his bread taste sweet, and keeps society sweet,—which all men respect and have consecrated; one of the sacred band, doing the needful, but irksome drudgery. Indeed, I felt a slight reproach, because I observed this from the window, and was not abroad and stirring about a similar business. The day went by, and at evening I passed the yard of another neighbor, who keeps many servants, and spends much money foolishly, while he adds nothing to the common stock, and there I saw the stone of the morning lying beside a whimsical structure intended to adorn this Lord Timothy Dexter's premises, and the dignity forthwith departed from the teamster's labor, in my eyes. In my opinion, the sun was made to light worthier toil than this. I may add that his employer has since run off, in debt to a good part of the town, and, after passing through Chancery, has settled somewhere else, there to become once more a patron of the arts.

The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward. To have done anything by which you earned money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse. If the laborer gets no more than the wages which his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself. If you would get money as a writer or a lecturer, you must be popular, which is to go down perpendicularly. Those services which the community will most readily pay for it is

most disagreeable to render. You are paid for being something less than a man. The State does not commonly reward a genius any more wisely. Even the poet-laureate would rather not have to celebrate the accidents of royalty. He must be bribed with a pipe of wine; and perhaps another poet is called away from his muse to gauge that very pipe. As for my own business, even that kind of surveying which I could do with most satisfaction my employers do not want. They would prefer that I should do my work coarsely and not too well, ay, not well enough. When I observe that there are different ways of surveying, my employer commonly asks which will give him the most land, not which is most correct. I once invented a rule for measuring cordwood, and tried to introduce it in Boston; but the measurer there told me that the sellers did not wish to have their wood measured correctly,—that he was already too accurate for them, and therefore they commonly got their wood measured in Charlestown before crossing the bridge.

The aim of the laborer should be, not to get his living, to get “a good job,” but to perform well a certain work; and, even in a pecuniary sense, it would be economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, or even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.

It is remarkable that there are few men so well employed, so much to their minds, but that a little money or fame would commonly buy them off from their present pursuit. I see advertisements for *active* young men, as if activity were the whole of a young man’s capital. Yet I have been

surprised when one has with confidence proposed to me, a grown man, to embark in some enterprise of his, as if I had absolutely nothing to do, my life having been a complete failure hitherto. What a doubtful compliment this to pay me! As if he had met me halfway across the ocean beating up against the wind, but bound nowhere, and proposed to me to go along with him! If I did, what do you think the underwriters would say? No, no! I am not without employment at this stage of the voyage. To tell the truth, I saw an advertisement for ablebodied seamen, when I was a boy, sauntering in my native port, and as soon as I became of age I embarked.

The community has no bribe that will tempt a wise man. You may raise money enough to tunnel a mountain, but you cannot raise money enough to hire a man who is minding *his own* business. An efficient and valuable man does what he can, whether the community pay him for it or not. The inefficient offer their inefficiency to the highest bidder, and are forever expecting to be put into office. One would suppose that they were rarely disappointed.

Perhaps I am more than usually jealous with respect to my freedom. I feel that my connection with and obligation to society are still very slight and transient. Those slight labors which afford me a livelihood, and by which it is allowed that I am to some extent serviceable to my contemporaries, are as yet commonly a pleasure to me, and I am not often reminded that they are a necessity. So far I am successful. But I foresee, that, if my wants should be much increased, the labor required to supply them would become a drudgery. If I should sell both my forenoons and afternoons to society, as most appear to do, I am sure that, for

me, there would be nothing left worth living for. I trust that I shall never thus sell my birthright for a mess of pottage. I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious, and yet not spend his time well. There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living. All great enterprises are self-supporting. The poet, for instance, must sustain his body by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill feeds its boilers with the shavings it makes. You must get your living by loving. But as it is said of the merchants that ninety-seven in a hundred fail, so the life of men generally, tried by this standard, is a failure, and bankruptcy may be surely prophesied.

Merely to come into the world the heir of a fortune is not to be born, but to be stillborn, rather. To be supported by the charity of friends, or a government-pension,—provided you continue to breathe,—by whatever fine synonyms you describe these relations, is to go into the almshouse. On Sundays the poor debtor goes to church to take an account of stock, and finds, of course, that his outgoes have been greater than his income. In the Catholic Church, especially, they go into chancery, make a clean confession, give up all, and think to start again. Thus men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up.

As for the comparative demand which men make on life, it is an important difference between the two, that the one is satisfied with a level success, that his marks can all be hit by point-blank shots, but the other, however low and unsuccessful his life may be, constantly elevates his aim, though at a very slight angle to the horizon. I should much rather be the last man,—though, as the Orientals say, “Greatness

doth not approach him who is forever looking down; and all those who are looking high are growing poor.”

It is remarkable that there is little or nothing to be remembered written on the subject of getting a living; how to make getting a living not merely honest and honorable, but altogether inviting and glorious; for if *getting* a living is not so, then living is not. One would think, from looking at literature, that this question had never disturbed a solitary individual's musings. Is it that men are too much disgusted with their experience to speak of it? The lesson of value which money teaches, which the Author of the Universe has taken so much pains to teach us, we are inclined to skip altogether. As for the means of living, it is wonderful how indifferent men of all classes are about it, even reformers, so called,—whether they inherit, or earn, or steal it. I think that Society has done nothing for us in this respect, or at least has undone what she has done. Cold and hunger seem more friendly to my nature than those methods which men have adopted and advise to ward them off.

The title *wise* is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men?—if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a treadmill? or does she teach how to succeed *by her example*? Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his *living* in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries,—or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he seem to prevail over some of them merely by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live, because his aunt remembered him in

her will? The ways in which most men get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life,—chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean, any better.

The rush to California, for instance, and the attitude, not merely of merchants, but of philosophers and prophets, so called, in relation to it, reflect the greatest disgrace on mankind. That so many are ready to live by luck, and so get the means of commanding the labor of others less lucky, without contributing any value to society! And that is called enterprise! I know of no more startling development of the immorality of trade, and all the common modes of getting a living. The philosophy and poetry and religion of such a mankind are not worth the dust of a puff-ball. The hog that gets his living by rooting, stirring up the soil so, would be ashamed of such company. If I could command the wealth of all the worlds by lifting my finger, I would not pay *such* a price for it. . . .¹

To speak impartially, the best men that I know are not serene, a world in themselves. For the most part, they dwell in forms, and flatter and study effect only more finely than the rest. We select granite for the underpinning of our houses and barns; we build fences of stone; but we do not ourselves rest on an underpinning of granitic truth, the lowest primitive rock. Our sills are rotten. What stuff is the man made of who is not coexistent in our thought with the purest and subtlest truth? I often accuse my finest acquaintances of an immense frivolity; for, while there are manners and compliments we do not meet, we do not teach one another the lessons of honesty and sincerity that the brutes do, or of

¹ Some minor omissions do not impair the essay as a whole.

steadiness and solidity that the rocks do. The fault is commonly mutual, however; for we do not habitually demand any more of each other.

That excitement about Kossuth,¹ consider how characteristic, but superficial, it was!—only another kind of politics or dancing. Men were making speeches to him all over the country, but each expressed only the thought, or the want of thought, of the multitude. No man stood on truth. They were merely banded together, as usual one leaning on another, and all together on nothing; as the Hindoos made the world rest on an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise, and the tortoise on a serpent, and had nothing to put under the serpent. For all fruit of that stir we have the Kossuth hat.

Just so hollow and ineffectual, for the most part, is our ordinary conversation. Surface meets surface. When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip. We rarely meet a man who can tell us any news which he has not read in a newspaper, or been told by his neighbor; and, for the most part, the only difference between us and our fellow is that he has seen the newspaper, or been out to tea, and we have not. In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly and desperately to the post-office. You may depend on it, that the poor fellow who walks away with the greatest number of letters, proud of his extensive correspondence, has not heard from himself this long while.

I do not know but it is too much to read one newspaper a week. I have tried it recently, and for so long it seems to me that I have not dwelt in my native region. The sun, the

¹ Lajos Kossuth, a Hungarian patriot who was highly feted in America in 1851.

clouds, the snow, the trees say not so much to me. You cannot serve two masters. It requires more than a day's devotion to know and to possess the wealth of a day.

We may well be ashamed to tell what things we have read or heard in our day. I do not know why my news should be so trivial,—considering what one's dreams and expectations are, why the developments should be so paltry. The news we hear, for the most part, is not news to our genius. It is the stalest repetition. You are often tempted to ask why such stress is laid on a particular experience which you have had,—that, after twenty-five years, you should meet Hobbins, Registrar of Deeds, again on the sidewalk. Have you not budged an inch, then? Such is the daily news. Its facts appear to float in the atmosphere, insignificant as the sporules of fungi, and impinge on some neglected *thallus*, or surface of our minds, which affords a basis for them, and hence a parasitic growth. We should wash ourselves clean of such news. Of what consequence, though our planet explode, if there is no character involved in the explosion? In health we have not the least curiosity about such events. We do not live for idle amusement. I would not run round a corner to see the world blow up.

All summer, and far into the autumn, perchance, you unconsciously went by the newspapers and the news, and now you find it was because the morning and the evening were full of news to you. Your walks were full of incidents. You attended, not to the affairs of Europe, but to your own affairs in Massachusetts fields. If you chance to live and move and have your being in that thin stratum in which the events that make the news transpire,—thinner than the paper on which it is printed,—then these things will fill the world for

you; but if you soar above or dive below that plane, you cannot remember nor be reminded of them. Really to see the sun rise or go down every day, so to relate ourselves to a universal fact, would preserve us sane forever. Nations! What are nations? Tartars, and Huns, and Chinamen! Like insects, they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a man that there are so many men. It is individuals that populate the world. Any man thinking may say with the Spirit of Lodin,—

*I look down from my height on nations,
And they become ashes before me;—
Calm is my dwelling in the clouds;
Pleasant are the great fields of my rest.*¹

Pray, let us live without being drawn by dogs, Esquimaux-fashion, tearing over hill and dale, and biting each other's ears.

Not without a slight shudder at the danger, I often perceive how near I had come to admitting into my mind the details of some trivial affair,—the news of the street; and I am astonished to observe how willing men are to lumber their minds with such rubbish,—to permit idle rumors and incidents of the most insignificant kind to intrude on ground which should be sacred to thought. Shall the mind be a public arena, where the affairs of the street and the gossip of the tea-table chiefly are discussed? Or shall it be a quarter of heaven itself,—an hypaethral temple, consecrated to the service of the gods? I find it so difficult to dispose of the few facts which to me are significant, that I hesitate to burden

¹ From James MacPherson's Ossianic poem, *Carricthura*.

my attention with those which are insignificant, which only a divine mind could illustrate. Such is, for the most part, the news in newspapers and conversation. It is important to preserve the mind's chastity in this respect. Think of admitting the details of a single case of the criminal court into our thoughts, to stalk profanely through their very *sanctum sanctorum* for an hour, ay, for many hours! to make a very bar-room of the mind's inmost apartment, as if for so long the dust of the street had occupied us,—the very street itself, with all its travel, its bustle, and filth, had passed through our thoughts' shrine! Would it not be an intellectual and moral suicide? When I have been compelled to sit spectator and auditor in a courtroom for some hours, and have seen my neighbors, who were not compelled, stealing in from time to time, and tiptoeing about with washed hands and faces, it has appeared to my mind's eye, that, when they took off their hats, their ears suddenly expanded into vast hoppers for sound, between which even their narrow heads were crowded. Like the vanes of windmills, they caught the broad but shallow stream of sound, which, after a few titillating gyrations in their coggy brains, passed out the other side. I wondered if, when they got home, they were as careful to wash their ears as before their hands and faces. It has seemed to me, at such a time, that the auditors and the witnesses, the jury and the counsel, the judge and the criminal at the bar,—if I may presume him guilty before he is convicted,—were all equally criminal, and a thunderbolt might be expected to descend and consume them all together.

By all kinds of traps and sign-boards, threatening the extreme penalty of the divine law, exclude such trespassers from the only ground which can be sacred to you. It is so

hard to forget what it is worse than useless to remember! If I am to be a thoroughfare, I prefer that it be of the mountain-brooks, the Parnassian streams, and not the town-sewers. There is inspiration, that gossip which comes to the ear of the attentive mind from the courts of heaven. There is the profane and stale revelation of the bar-room and the police court. The same ear is fitted to receive both communications. Only the character of the hearer determines to which it shall be open, and to which closed. I believe that the mind can be permanently profaned by the habit of attending to trivial things, so that all our thoughts shall be tinged with triviality. Our very intellect shall be macadamized, as it were,—its foundation broken into fragments for the wheels of travel to roll over; and if you would know what will make the most durable pavement, surpassing rolled stones, spruce blocks, and asphaltum, you have only to look into some of our minds which have been subjected to this treatment so long.

If we have thus desecrated ourselves,—as who has not?—the remedy will be by wariness and devotion to reconsecrate ourselves, and make once more a fane of the mind. We should treat our minds, that is, ourselves, as innocent and ingenuous children, whose guardians we are, and be careful what objects and what subjects we thrust on their attention. Read not the Times. Read the Eternities. Conventionalities are at length as bad as impurities. Even the facts of science may dust the mind by their dryness, unless they are in a sense effaced each morning, or rather rendered fertile by the dews of fresh and living truth. Knowledge does not come to us by details, but in flashes of light from heaven. Yes, every thought that passes through the mind helps to

wear and tear it, and to deepen the ruts, which, as in the streets of Pompeii, evince how much it has been used. How many things there are concerning which we might well deliberate whether we had better know them,—had better let their peddling-carts be driven, even at the slowest trot or walk, over that bridge of glorious span by which we trust to pass at last from the farthest brink of time to the nearest shore of eternity! Have we no culture, no refinement,—but skill only to live coarsely and serve the Devil?—to acquire a little worldly wealth, or fame, or liberty, and make a false show with it, as if we were all husk and shell, with no tender and living kernel to us? Shall our institutions be like those chestnut-burs which contain abortive nuts, perfect only to prick the fingers. . . .

What is called politics is comparatively something so superficial and inhuman that, practically, I have never fairly recognized that it concerns me at all. The newspapers, I perceive, devote some of their columns specially to politics or government without charge; and this, one would say, is all that saves it; but as I love literature and to some extent the truth also, I never read those columns at any rate. I do not wish to blunt my sense of right so much. I have not got to answer for having read a single President's Message. A strange age of the world this, when empires, kingdoms, and republics come a-begging to a private man's door, and utter their complaints at his elbow! I cannot take up a newspaper but I find that some wretched government or other, hard pushed, and on its last legs, is interceding with me, the reader, to vote for it,—more importunate than an Italian beggar; and if I have a mind to look at its certificate, made, perchance, by some benevolent merchant's clerk, or the

skipper that brought it over, for it cannot speak a word of English itself, I shall probably read of the eruption of some Vesuvius, or the overflowing of some Po, true or forged, which brought it into this condition. I do not hesitate, in such a case, to suggest work, or the almshouse; or why not keep its castle in silence, as I do commonly? The poor President, what with preserving his popularity and doing his duty, is completely bewildered. The newspapers are the ruling power. Any other government is reduced to a few marines at Fort Independence. If a man neglects to read the Daily Times, government will go down on its knees to him, for this is the only treason in these days.

Those things which now most engage the attention of men, as politics and the daily routine, are, it is true, vital functions of human society, but should be unconsciously performed, like the corresponding functions of the physical body. They are *infra*-human, a kind of vegetation. I sometimes awake to a half-consciousness of them going on about me, as a man may become conscious of some of the processes of digestion in a morbid state, and so have the dyspepsia, as it is called. It is as if a thinker submitted himself to be rasped by the great gizzard of creation. Politics is, as it were, the gizzard of society, full of grit and gravel, and the two political parties are its two opposite halves,—sometimes split into quarters, it may be, which grind on each other. Not only individuals, but states, have thus a confirmed dyspepsia, which expresses itself, you can imagine by what sort of eloquence. Thus our life is not altogether a forgetting, but also, alas! to a great extent, a remembering, of that which we should never have been conscious of, certainly not in our

waking hours. Why should we not meet, not always as dyspeptics, to tell our bad dreams, but sometimes as *eupeptics*, to congratulate each other on the ever-glorious morning? I do not make an exorbitant demand, surely.

A LIBERAL EDUCATION; AND WHERE TO FIND IT¹

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY (1825-1895)

From *Lay Sermons*, 1870.

What part should science play in the program of general education? Huxley shows that a liberal education can be found readily in the study of the sciences. His friend Matthew Arnold took an opposite view, and the point is still debatable.

The business which the South London Working Men's College² has undertaken is a great work; indeed, I might say, that Education, with which that college proposes to grapple, is the greatest work of all those which lie ready to a man's hand just at present.

And, at length, this fact is becoming generally recognized. You cannot go anywhere without hearing a buzz of more or less confused and contradictory talk on this subject—nor can you fail to notice that, in one point at any rate, there is a very decided advance upon like discussions in former days. Nobody outside the agricultural interest now dares to say that education is a bad thing. If any representative of the once large and powerful party, which, in former

¹ Used with the courtesy of Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., the authorized publishers.

² This essay is part of an address delivered in 1868 to the College, of which Huxley was principal.

days, proclaimed this opinion, still exists in the semifossil state, he keeps his thoughts to himself. In fact, there is a chorus of voices, almost distressing in their harmony, raised in favor of the doctrine that education is the great panacea for human troubles, and that, if the country is not shortly to go to the dogs, everybody must be educated.

The politicians tell us, "You must educate the masses because they are going to be masters." The clergy join in the cry for education, for they affirm that the people are drifting away from church and chapel into the broadest infidelity. The manufacturers and the capitalists swell the chorus lustily. They declare that ignorance makes bad workmen; that England will soon be unable to turn out cotton goods, or steam engines, cheaper than other people; and then, Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory will be departed from us. And a few voices are lifted up in favor of the doctrine that the masses should be educated because they are men and women with unlimited capacities of being, doing, and suffering, and that it is as true now, as it ever was, that the people perish for lack of knowledge.

These members of the minority, with whom I confess I have a good deal of sympathy, are doubtful whether any of the other reasons urged in favor of the education of the people are of much value—whether, indeed, some of them are based upon either wise or noble grounds of action. They question if it be wise to tell people that you will do for them, out of fear of their power, what you have left undone, so long as your only motive was compassion for their weakness and their sorrows. And, if ignorance of everything which is needful a ruler should know is likely to do so much

harm in the governing classes of the future, why is it, they ask reasonably enough, that such ignorance in the governing classes of the past has not been viewed with equal horror?

Compare the average artisan and the average country squire, and it may be doubted if you will find a pin to choose between the two in point of ignorance, class feeling, or prejudice. It is true that the ignorance is of a different sort—that the class feeling is in favor of a different class—and that the prejudice has a distinct savor of wrong-headedness in each case—but it is questionable if the one is either a bit better, or a bit worse, than the other. The old protectionist theory is the doctrine of trades unions as applied by the squires, and the modern trades unionism is the doctrine of the squires applied by the artisans. Why should we be worse off under one *régime* than under the other?

Again, this skeptical minority asks the clergy to think whether it is really want of education which keeps the masses away from their ministrations—whether the most completely educated men are not as open to reproach on this score as the workmen; and whether, perchance, this may not indicate that it is not education which lies at the bottom of the matter?

Once more, these people, whom there is no pleasing, venture to doubt whether the glory which rests upon being able to undersell all the rest of the world, is a very safe kind of glory—whether we may not purchase it too dear; especially if we allow education, which ought to be directed to the making of men, to be diverted into a process of manufacturing human tools, wonderfully adroit in the exercise of some technical industry, but good for nothing else.

And, finally, these people inquire whether it is the masses alone who need a reformed and improved education. They ask whether the richest of our public schools might not well be made to supply knowledge, as well as gentlemanly habits, a strong class feeling, and eminent proficiency in cricket. They seem to think that the noble foundations of our old universities are hardly fulfilling their functions in their present posture of half-clerical seminaries, half race-courses, where men are trained to win a senior wranglership, or a double-first, as horses are trained to win a cup, with as little reference to the need of after-life in the case of the man as in that of the racer. And while as zealous for education as the rest, they affirm that if the education of the richer classes were such as to fit them to be the leaders and the governors of the poorer; and if the education of the poorer classes were such as to enable them to appreciate really wise guidance and good governance, the politicians need not fear mob-law, nor the clergy lament their want of flocks, nor the capitalists prognosticate the annihilation of the prosperity of the country.

Such is the diversity of opinion upon the why and the wherefore of education. And my hearers will be prepared to expect that the practical recommendations which are put forward are not less discordant. There is a loud cry for compulsory education. We English, in spite of constant experience to the contrary, preserve a touching faith in the efficacy of acts of parliament; and I believe we should have compulsory education in the course of next session if there were the least probability that half a dozen leading statesmen of different parties would agree what that education should be.

Some hold that education without theology is worse

than none. Others maintain, quite as strongly, that education with theology is in the same predicament. But this is certain, that those who hold the first opinion can by no means agree what theology should be taught; and that those who maintain the second are in a small minority.

At any rate "make people learn to read, write, and cipher," say a great many; and the advice is undoubtedly sensible as far as it goes. But, as has happened to me in former days, those who, in despair of getting anything better, advocate this measure, are met with the objection that it is very like making a child practise the use of a knife, fork, and spoon, without giving it a particle of meat. I really don't know what reply is to be made to such an objection.

But it would be unprofitable to spend more time in disentangling, or rather in showing up the knots in, the ravelled skeins of our neighbors. Much more to the purpose is it to ask if we possess any clue of our own which may guide us among these entanglements. And by way of a beginning, let us ask ourselves—What is education? Above all things, what is our ideal of a thoroughly liberal education?—of that education which, if we could begin life again, we would give ourselves—of that education which, if we could mold the fates to our own will, we would give our children? Well, I know not what may be your conceptions upon this matter, but I will tell you mine, and I hope I shall find that our views are not very discrepant.

Suppose it were perfectly certain that the life and fortune of every one of us would, one day or other, depend upon his winning or losing a game at chess. Don't you think that we should all consider it to be a primary duty to learn at least the names and the moves of the pieces; to have a

notion of a gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check? Do you not think that we should look with a disapprobation amounting to scorn, upon the father who allowed his son, or the state which allowed its members, to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight?

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse.

My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which Retzsch¹ has depicted Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love, as we say, and would rather lose than win—and I should accept it as an image of human life.

¹ A 19th century German painter.

Well, what I mean by Education is learning the rules of this mighty game. In other words, education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of Nature, under which name I include not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways; and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest and loving desire to move in harmony with those laws. For me, education means neither more nor less than this. Anything which professes to call itself education must be tried by this standard, and if it fails to stand the test, I will not call it education, whatever may be the force of authority, or of numbers, upon the other side.

It is important to remember that, in strictness, there is no such thing as an uneducated man. Take an extreme case. Suppose that an adult man, in the full vigour of his faculties, could be suddenly placed in the world, as Adam is said to have been, and then left to do as he best might. How long would he be left uneducated? Not five minutes. Nature would begin to teach him, through the eye, the ear, the touch, the properties of objects. Pain and pleasure would be at his elbow telling him to do this and avoid that; and by slow degrees the man would receive an education which, if narrow, would be thorough, real, and adequate to his circumstances, though there would be no extras and very few accomplishments.

And if to this solitary man entered a second Adam, or, better still, an Eve, a new and greater world, that of social and moral phenomena, would be revealed. Joys and woes, compared with which all others might seem but faint shadows, would spring from the new relations. Happiness and sorrow would take the place of the coarser monitors, pleas-

ure and pain; but conduct would still be shaped by the observation of the natural consequences of actions; or, in other words, by the laws of the nature of man.

To every one of us the world was once as fresh and new as to Adam. And then, long before we were susceptible of any other mode of instruction, Nature took us in hand, and every minute of waking life brought its educational influence, shaping our actions into rough accordance with Nature's laws, so that we might not be ended untimely by too gross disobedience. Nor should I speak of this process of education as past for any one, be he as old as he may. For every man the world is as fresh as it was at the first day, and as full of untold novelties for him who has the eyes to see them. And Nature is still continuing her patient education of us in that great university, the universe, of which we are all members—Nature having no Test-Acts.

Those who take honors in Nature's university, who learn the laws which govern men and things and obey them, are the really great and successful men in this world. The great mass of mankind are the "Poll," who pick up just enough to get through without much discredit. Those who won't learn at all are plucked; and then you can't come up again. Nature's pluck means extermination.

Thus the question of compulsory education is settled so far as Nature is concerned. Her bill on that question was framed and passed long ago. But, like all compulsory legislation, that of Nature is harsh and wasteful in its operation. Ignorance is visited as sharply as wilful disobedience—incapacity meets with the same punishment as crime. Nature's discipline is not even a word and a blow, and the blow first;

but the blow without the word. It is left to you to find out why your ears are boxed.

The object of what we commonly call education—that education in which man intervenes and which I shall distinguish as artificial education—is to make good these defects in Nature's methods; to prepare the child to receive Nature's education, neither incapably nor ignorantly, nor with wilful disobedience; and to understand the preliminary symptoms of her pleasure, without waiting for the box on the ear. In short, all artificial education ought to be an anticipation of natural education. And a liberal education is an artificial education which has not only prepared a man to escape the great evils of disobedience to natural laws, but has trained him to appreciate and to seize upon the rewards, which Nature scatters with as free a hand as her penalties.

That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.

Such an one and no other, I conceive, has had a liberal education; for he is, as completely as a man can be, in harmony with Nature. He will make the best of her, and she of him. They will get on together rarely; she as his ever beneficent mother; he as her mouthpiece, her conscious self, her minister and interpreter. . . .

PULVIS ET UMBRA¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

From *Scribner's Magazine*, 1888.

In his smooth and fluid style Stevenson questions what there is in man to cause him to rise from disheartening failure and continue valiantly to strive. Some regard this essay as pessimistic; others as optimistic. Much depends on one's own point of view. The title means "Dust and a Shade."

We look for some reward of our endeavours and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun. The canting moralist tells us of right and wrong; and we look abroad, even on the face of our small earth, and find them change with every climate, and no country where some action is not honoured for a virtue and none where it is not branded for a vice; and we look in our experience, and find no vital congruity in the wisest rules, but at the best a municipal fitness. It is not strange if we are tempted to despair of good. We ask too much. Our religions and moralities have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all emasculate and sentimentalised, and only please and weaken. Truth is of a rougher strain. In the harsh face of life, faith can read a bracing gospel. The human

¹ Used with the courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons, the authorized publishers.

race is a thing more ancient than the ten commandments; and the bones and revolutions of the Kosmos, in whose joints we are but moss and fungus, more ancient still.

I

Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling. There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios. Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH_3 and H_2O . Consideration dares not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man.

But take the Kosmos with a grosser faith, as our senses give it us. We behold space sown with rotatory islands, suns and worlds and the shards and wrecks of systems: some, like the sun, still blazing; some rotting, like the earth; others, like the moon, stable in desolation. All of these we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help us to conceive; to whose incredible properties no familiarities can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; seized through all its atoms with a pediculous malady; swelling in tumours that become independent, sometimes even (by an abhorrent prodigy) locomotory; one splitting into millions, millions cohering into

one, as the malady proceeds through varying stages. This vital putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with occasional disgust, and the profusion of worms in a piece of ancient turf, or the air of a marsh darkened with insects, will sometimes check our breathing so that we aspire for cleaner places. But none is clean: the moving sand is infected with lice; the pure spring, where it bursts out of the mountain, is a mere issue of worms; even in the hard rock the crystal is forming.

In two main shapes this eruption covers the countenance of the earth: the animal and the vegetable: one in some degree the inversion of the other: the second rooted to the spot; the first coming detached out of its natal mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet of insects, or towering into the heavens on the wings of birds,—a thing so incomprehensible that, if it be well considered, the heart stops. To what passes with the anchored vermin, we have little clue: doubtless they have their joys and sorrows, their delights and killing agonies,—it appears not how. But of the locomotory, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles: the miracles of sight, of hearing, of the projection of sound, things that bridge space; the miracles of memory and reason, by which the present is conceived, and when it is gone its image kept living in the brains of man and brute; the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desires and staggering consequences. And to put the last touch upon this mountain mass of the revolting and the inconceivable, all these prey upon each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that summary process growing fat:

the vegetarian, the whale, perhaps the tree, not less than the lion of the desert,—for the vegetarian is only the eater of the dumb.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

II

What a monstrous spectre is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming;—and yet looked at nearer, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him

one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbour, to his God: an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame, below which, if it be possible, he will not stoop. The design in most men is one of conformity; here and there, in picked natures, it transcends itself and soars on the other side, arming martyrs with independence; but in all, in their degrees, it is a bosom thought:—not in man alone, for we trace it in dogs and cats whom we know fairly well, and doubtless some similar point of honour sways the elephant, the oyster, and the louse, of whom we know so little:—but in man, at least, it sways with so complete an empire that merely selfish things come second, even with the selfish; that appetites are starved, fears are conquered, pains supported; that almost the dullest shrinks from the reproof of a glance, although it were a child's; and all but the most cowardly stand amid the risks of war; and the more noble, having strongly conceived an act as due to their ideal, affront and embrace death. Strange enough if, with their singular origin and perverted practice, they think they are to be rewarded in some future life; stranger still, if they are persuaded of the contrary, and think this blow which they solicit will strike them senseless for eternity. I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents,—of organized injustice, cowardly violence, and treacherous crime, and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive;

and surely we should find it both touching and inspiring, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labour.

If the first view of this creature, stalking in his rotatory isle, be a thing to shake the courage of the stoutest, on this nearer sight he startles us with an admiring wonder. It matters not where we look, under what climate we observe him, in what state of society, in what depth of ignorance, burdened with what erroneous morality; by camp-fires in Assiniboia, the snow powdering his shoulders, the wind plucking his blanket, as he sits, passing the ceremonial calumet and uttering his grave opinions like a Roman senator; in ships at sea, a man inured to hardship and vile pleasures, his brightest hope a fiddle in a tavern and a bedizened trull who sells herself to rob him, and he for all that simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly like a child, constant to toil, brave to drown, for others; in the slums of cities, moving among indifferent millions to mechanical employment, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbours, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin-palace, perhaps long-suffering with the drunken wife that ruins him; in India (a woman this time) kneeling with broken cries and streaming tears, as she drowns her child in the sacred river; in the brothel, the discard of society, living mainly on strong drink, fed with affronts, a fool, a thief, the comrade of thieves, and even here keeping the point of honour and the touch of pity, often repaying the world's scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple, and at a certain cost, rejecting riches:—everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and carriage, everywhere the en-

sign of man's ineffectual goodness:—ah! if I could show you this! If I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging, in the brothel or on the scaffold, to some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls! They may seek to escape, and yet they cannot; it is not alone their privilege and glory, but their doom; they are condemned to some nobility; all their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter.

Of all earth's meteors, here at least is the most strange and consoling: That this ennobled lemur, this hair-crowned bubble of the dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows, should yet deny himself his rare delights, and add to his frequent pains, and live for an ideal, however misconceived. Nor can we stop with man. A new doctrine, received with screams a little while ago by canting moralists, and still not properly worked into the body of our thoughts, lights us a step farther into the heart of this rough but noble universe. For nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart. Close at his heels we see the dog, prince of another genus: and in him too, we see dumbly testified the same cultus of an unattainable ideal, the same constancy in failure. Does it stop with the dog? We look at our feet where the ground is blackened with the swarming ant; a creature so small, so far from us in the hierarchy of brutes, that we can scarce trace and scarce comprehend his doings; and here also, in his ordered politics and rigorous justice, we see confessed the law of duty and the fact of individual sin. Does it stop, then,

with the ant? Rather this desire of well-doing and this doom of frailty run through all the grades of life: rather is this earth, from the frosty top of Everest to the next margin of the internal fire, one stage of ineffectual virtues and one temple of pious tears and perseverance. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together. It is the common and the god-like law of life. The browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest, the squirrel in the oak, the thousand-footed creeper in the dust, as they share with us the gift of life, share with us the love of an ideal; strive like us—like us are tempted to grow weary of the struggle—to do well; like us receive at times unmerited refreshment, visitings of support, returns of courage; and are condemned like us to be crucified between that double law of the members and the will. Are they like us, I wonder, in the timid hope of some reward, some sugar with the drug? do they, too, stand aghast at unrewarded virtues, at the sufferings of those whom, in our partiality, we take to be just, and the prosperity of such as in our blindness we call wicked? It may be, and yet God knows what they should look for. Even while they look, even while they repent, the foot of man treads them by thousands in the dust, the yelping hounds burst upon their trail, the bullet speeds, the knives are heating in the den of the vivisectionist; or the dew falls, and the generation of a day is blotted out. For these are creatures compared with whom our weakness is strength, our ignorance wisdom, our brief span eternity.

And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror and under the imminent hand of death, God forbid it should be man the erected, the reasoner, the wise in his own eyes—God forbid it should be man that wearies in well-doing,

that despairs of unrewarded effort, or utters the language of complaint. Let it be enough for faith, that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: surely not all in vain.

SCIENCE AND THE SAVAGES¹

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON (1874-1936)

From *Heretics*, 1905.

Among the "heretics" are scientists who mishandle human nature. Chesterton's paradoxes and smart analogies make one pause and ponder. Opinion is divergent on whether a subject matter consisting of variables can justly be called a science.

A permanent disadvantage of the study of folklore and kindred subjects is that the man of science can hardly be in the nature of things very frequently a man of the world. He is a student of nature; he is scarcely ever a student of human nature. And even where this difficulty is overcome, and he is in some sense a student of human nature, this is only a very faint beginning of the painful progress towards being human. For the study of primitive race and religion stands apart in one important respect from all, or nearly all, the ordinary scientific studies. A man can understand astronomy only by being an astronomer; he can understand entomology only by being an entomologist (or, perhaps, an insect); but he can understand a great deal of anthropology merely by being a man. He is himself the animal which he studies. Hence arises

¹ Reprinted by permission of Dodd, Mead and Company from *Heretics* by G. K. Chesterton. Copyright 1905, 1932 by G. K. Chesterton. For Canadian use acknowledgment goes to John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, London.

the fact which strikes the eye everywhere in the records of ethnology and folklore—the fact that the same frigid and detached spirit which leads to success in the study of astronomy or botany leads to disaster in the study of mythology or human origins. It is necessary to cease to be a man in order to do justice to a microbe; it is not necessary to cease to be a man in order to do justice to men. That same suppression of sympathies, that same waving away of intuitions or guess-work which make a man preternaturally clever in dealing with the stomach of a spider, will make him preternaturally stupid in dealing with the heart of man. He is making himself inhuman in order to understand humanity. An ignorance of the other world is boasted by many men of science; but in this matter their defect arises, not from ignorance of the other world, but from ignorance of this world. For the secrets about which anthropologists concern themselves can be best learnt, not from books or voyages, but from the ordinary commerce of man with man. The secret of why some savage tribe worships monkeys or the moon is not to be found even by travelling among those savages and taking down their answers in a notebook, although the cleverest man may pursue this course. The answer to the riddle is in England; it is in London; nay, it is in his own heart. When a man has discovered why men in Bond Street wear black hats he will at the same moment have discovered why men in Timbuctoo wear red feathers. The mystery in the heart of some savage war-dance should not be studied in books of scientific travel; it should be studied at a subscription ball. If a man desires to find out the origins of religions, let him not go to the Sandwich Islands; let him go to church. If a man wishes to know the origin of human society, to know

what society, philosophically speaking, really is, let him not go into the British Museum; let him go into society.

This total misunderstanding of the real nature of ceremonial gives rise to the most awkward and dehumanized versions of the conduct of men in rude lands or ages. The man of science, not realizing that ceremonial is essentially a thing which is done without a reason, has to find a reason for every sort of ceremonial, and, as might be supposed, the reason is generally a very absurd one—absurd because it originates not in the simple mind of the barbarian, but in the sophisticated mind of the professor. The learned man will say, for instance, "The natives of Mumbojumbo Land believe that the dead man can eat, and will require food upon his journey to the other world. This is attested by the fact that they place food in the grave, and that any family not complying with this rite is the object of the anger of the priests and the tribe." To anyone acquainted with humanity this way of talking is topsy-turvy. It is like saying, "The English in the twentieth century believed that a dead man could smell. This is attested by the fact that they always covered his grave with lilies, violets, or other flowers. Some priestly and tribal terrors were evidently attached to the neglect of this action, as we have records of several old ladies who were very much disturbed in mind because their wreaths had not arrived in time for the funeral." It may be of course that savages put food with a dead man because they think that a dead man can eat, or weapons with a dead man because they think that a dead man can fight. But personally I do not believe that they think anything of the kind. I believe they put food or weapons on the dead for the same reason that we put flowers, because it is an exceedingly natu-

ral and obvious thing to do. We do not understand, it is true, the emotion which makes us think it obvious and natural; but that is because, like all the important emotions of human existence, it is essentially irrational. We do not understand the savage for the same reason that the savage does not understand himself. And the savage does not understand himself for the same reason that we do not understand ourselves either.

The obvious truth is that the moment any matter has passed through the human mind it is finally and for ever spoilt for all purposes of science. It has become a thing incurably mysterious and infinite; his mortal has put on immortality. Even what we call our material desires are spiritual, because they are human. Science can analyse a pork-chop, and say how much of it is phosphorus and how much is protein; but science cannot analyse any man's wish for a pork-chop, and say how much of it is hunger, how much custom, how much nervous fancy, how much a haunting love of the beautiful. The man's desire for the pork-chop remains literally as mystical and ethereal as his desire for heaven. All attempts, therefore, at a science of any human things, at a science of history, a science of folklore, a science of sociology, are by their nature not merely hopeless, but crazy. You can no more be certain in economic history that a man's desire for money was merely a desire for money than you can be certain in hagiology that a saint's desire for God was merely a desire for God. And this kind of vagueness in the primary phenomena of the study is an absolutely final blow to anything in the nature of a science. Men can construct a science with very few instruments, or with very plain instruments; but no one on earth could construct a

science with unreliable instruments. A man might work out the whole of mathematics with a handful of pebbles, but not with a handful of clay which was always falling apart into new fragments, and falling together into new combinations. A man might measure heaven and earth with a reed, but not with a growing reed.

As one of the enormous follies of folklore, let us take the case of the transmigration of stories, and the alleged unity of their source. Story after story the scientific mythologists have cut out of its place in history, and pinned side by side with similar stories in their museum of fables. The process is industrious, it is fascinating, and the whole of it rests on one of the plainest fallacies in the world. That a story has been told all over the place at some time or other not only does not prove that it really never happened; it does not even faintly indicate or make slightly more probable that it never happened. That a large number of fishermen have falsely asserted that they have caught a pike two feet long does not in the least affect the question of whether anyone ever really did so. That numberless journalists announce a Franco-German war merely for money is no evidence one way or the other upon the dark question of whether such a war ever occurred. Doubtless in a few hundred years the innumerable Franco-German wars that did not happen will have cleared the scientific mind of any belief in the legendary war of '70 which did. But that will be because, if folklore students remain at all, their nature will be unchanged; and their services to folklore will be still as they are at present, greater than they know. For in truth these men do something far more godlike than studying legends; they create them.

There are two kinds of stories which the scientists say cannot be true, because everybody tells them. The first class consists of the stories which are told everywhere, because they are somewhat odd or clever; there is nothing in the world to prevent their having happened to somebody as an adventure any more than there is anything to prevent their having occurred, as they certainly did occur, to somebody as an idea. But they are not likely to have happened to many people. The second class of their "myths" consist of the stories that are told everywhere for the simple reason that they happen everywhere. Of the first class, for instance, we might take such an example as the story of William Tell, now generally ranked among legends upon the sole ground that it is found in the tales of other peoples. Now, it is obvious that this was told everywhere because whether true or fictitious it is what is called "a good story"; it is odd, exciting, and it has a climax. But to suggest that some such eccentric incident can never have happened in the whole history of archery, or that it did not happen to any particular person of whom it is told, is stark impudence. The idea of shooting at a mark attached to some valuable or beloved person is an idea doubtless that might easily have occurred to any inventive poet. But it is also an idea that might easily occur to any boastful archer. It might be one of the fantastic caprices of some story-teller. It might equally well be one of the fantastic caprices of some tyrant. It might occur first in real life and afterwards occur in legends. Or it might just as well occur first in legends and afterwards occur in real life. If no apple has ever been shot off a boy's head from the beginning of the world, it may be done tomorrow morning, and by somebody who has never heard of William Tell.

This type of tale, indeed, may be pretty fairly paralleled with the ordinary anecdote terminating in a repartee or an Irish bull. Such a retort as the famous "Je ne vois pas la nécessité"¹ we have all seen attributed to Talleyrand, to Voltaire, to Henri Quatre, to an anonymous judge, and so on. But this variety does not in any way make it more likely that the thing was never said at all. It is highly likely that it was really said by somebody unknown. It is highly likely that it was really said by Talleyrand. In any case, it is not any more difficult to believe that the *mot* might have occurred to a man in conversation than to a man writing memoirs. It might have occurred to any of the men I have mentioned. But there is this point of distinction about it, that it is not likely to have occurred to all of them. And this is where the first class of so-called myth differs from the second to which I have previously referred. For there is a second class of incident found to be common to the stories of five or six heroes, say to Sigurd, to Hercules, to Rustem, to the Cid, and so on. And the peculiarity of this myth is that not only is it highly reasonable to imagine that it really happened to one hero, but it is highly reasonable to imagine that it really happened to all of them. Such a story, for instance, is that of a great man having his strength swayed or thwarted by the mysterious weakness of a woman. The anecdotal story, the story of William Tell, is, as I have said, popular because it is peculiar. But this kind of story, the story of Samson and Delilah, of Arthur and Guinevere, is obviously popular because it is not peculiar. It is popular as good, quiet fiction is popular, because it tells the truth about

¹ "I do not see the necessity"—the reputed answer given to one who said by way of defence that he had to live somehow.

people. If the ruin of Samson by a woman, and the ruin of Hercules by a woman, have a common legendary origin, it is gratifying to know that we can also explain, as a fable, the ruin of Nelson by a woman and the ruin of Parnell by a woman. And, indeed, I have no doubt whatever that, some centuries hence, the students of folklore will refuse altogether to believe that Elizabeth Barrett eloped with Robert Browning, and will prove their point up to the hilt by the unquestionable fact that the whole fiction of the period was full of such elopements from end to end.

Possibly the most pathetic of all the delusions of the modern students of primitive belief is the notion they have about the thing they call anthropomorphism. They believe that primitive men attributed phenomena to a god in human form in order to explain them, because his mind in its sullen limitation could not reach any further than his own clownish existence. The thunder was called the voice of a man, the lightning the eyes of a man, because by this explanation they were made more reasonable and comfortable. The final cure for all this kind of philosophy is to walk down a lane at night. Anyone who does so will discover very quickly that men pictured something semi-human at the back of all things, not because such a thought was natural, but because it was supernatural; not because it made things more comprehensible, but because it made them a hundred times more incomprehensible and mysterious. For a man walking down a lane at night can see the conspicuous fact that as long as nature keeps to her own course, she has no power with us at all. As long as a tree is a tree, it is a top-heavy monster with a hundred arms, a thousand tongues, and only one leg. But so long as a tree is a tree, it does not frighten us at all. It

begins to be something alien, to be something strange, only when it looks like ourselves. When a tree really looks like a man our knees knock under us. And when the whole universe looks like a man we fall on our faces.

QUALITY¹

JOHN GALSWORTHY (1867-1933)

From *The Inn of Tranquility*, 1912.

Galsworthy uses the narrative technique to sharpen the conflict between the artisan and mass production. There is pathos in the passing of the perfectionist. Is there no room for him at all in modern society?

I knew him from the days of my extreme youth, because he made my father's boots; inhabiting with his elder brother two little shops let into one, in a small by-street—now no more, but then most fashionably placed in the West End.

That tenement had a certain quiet distinction; there was no sign upon its face that he made for any of the Royal Family—merely his own German name of Gessler Brothers; and in the window a few pairs of boots. I remember that it always troubled me to account for those unvarying boots in the window, for he made only what was ordered, reaching nothing down, and it seemed so inconceivable that what he made could ever have failed to fit. Had he bought them to put there? That, too, seemed inconceivable. He would never have tolerated in his house leather on which he had not worked himself. Besides, they were too beautiful—the pair

¹ Reprinted from *The Inn of Tranquility* by John Galsworthy; copyright 1912 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940 by Ada Galsworthy; used in the United States by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, in Canada by permission of William Heineman, Ltd.

of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding boots with marvellous sooty glow, as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years. Those pairs could only have been made by one who saw before him the Soul of Boot—so truly were they prototypes incarnating the very spirit of all foot-gear. These thoughts, of course, came to me later, though even when I was promoted to him, at the age of perhaps fourteen, some inkling haunted me of the dignity of himself and brother. For to make boots—such boots as he made—seemed to me then, and still seems to me, mysterious and wonderful.

I remember well my shy remark, one day, while stretching out to him my youthful foot:

“Isn't it awfully hard to do, Mr. Gessler?”

And his answer, given with a sudden smile from out of the sardonic redness of his beard: “Id is an Ardt!”

Himself, he was a little as if made from leather, with his yellow crinkly face, and crinkly reddish hair and beard, and neat folds slanting down his cheeks to the corners of his mouth, and his guttural and one-toned voice; for leather is a sardonic substance, and stiff and slow of purpose. And that was the character of his face, save that his eyes, which were gray-blue, had in them the simple gravity of one secretly possessed by the Ideal. His elder brother was so very like him—though watery, paler in every way, with a great industry—that sometimes in early days I was not quite sure of him until the interview was over. Then I knew that it was he, if the words, “I will ask my brudder,” had not been spoken; and, that, if they had, it was his elder brother.

When one grew old and wild and ran up bills, one

somehow never ran them up with Gessler Brothers. It would not have seemed becoming to go in there and stretch out one's foot to that blue iron-spectacled glance, owing him for more than—say—two pairs, just the comfortable reassurance that one was still his client.

For it was not possible to go to him very often—his boots lasted terribly, having something beyond the temporary—some, as it were, essence of boot stitched into them.

One went in, not as into most shops, in the mood of: "Please serve me, and let me go!" but restfully, as one enters a church; and, sitting on the single wooden chair, waited—for there was never anybody there. Soon, over the top edge of that sort of well—rather dark, and smelling soothingly of leather—which formed the shop, there would be seen his face, or that of his elder brother, peering down. A guttural sound, and the tip-tap of bast slippers beating the narrow wooden stairs, and he would stand before one without coat, a little bent, in leather apron, with sleeves turned back, blinking—as if awakened from some dream of boots, or like an owl surprised in daylight and annoyed at this interruption.

And I would say: "How do you do, Mr. Gessler? Could you make me a pair of Russia leather boots?"

Without a word he would leave me, retiring whence he came, or into the other portion of the shop, and I could continue to rest in the wooden chair, inhaling the incense of his trade. Soon he would come back, holding in his thin, veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it, he would remark: "What a beaudiful biece!" When I, too, had admired it, he would speak again. "When do you wand dem?" And I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say: "To-morrow ford-

nighd?" Or if he were his elder brother: "I will ask my brudder!"

Then I would murmur: "Thank you! Good-morning, Mr. Gessler." "Goot-morning!" he would reply, still looking at the leather in his hand. And as I moved to the door, I would hear the tip-tap of his bast slippers restoring him, up the stairs, to his dream of boots. But if it were some new kind of foot-gear that he had not yet made me, then indeed he would observe ceremony—divesting me of my boot and holding it long in his hand, looking at it with eyes at once critical and loving, as if recalling the glow with which he had created it, and rebuking the way in which one had disorganized this masterpiece. Then, placing my foot on a piece of paper, he would two or three times tickle the outer edges with a pencil and pass his nervous fingers over my toes, feeling himself into the heart of my requirements.

I cannot forget that day on which I had occasion to say to him: "Mr. Gessler, that last pair of town walking-boots creaked, you know."

He looked at me for a time without replying, as if expecting me to withdraw or qualify the statement, then said:

"Id shouldn'd 'ave greaked."

"It did, I'm afraid."

"You goddem wed before dey found demselves?"

"I don't think so."

At that he lowered his eyes, as if hunting for memory of those boots, and I felt sorry I had mentioned this grave thing.

"Zend dem back!" he said; "I will look at dem."

A feeling of compassion for my creaking boots surged

up in me, so well could I imagine the sorrowful long curiosity of regard which he would bend on them.

"Zome boods," he said slowly, "are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem, I dake dem off your bill."

Once (once only) I went absent-mindedly into his shop in a pair of boots bought in an emergency at some large firm's. He took my order without showing me any leather, and I could feel his eyes penetrating the inferior integument of my foot. At last he said:

"Dose are nod my boods."

The tone was not one of anger, nor of sorrow, not even of contempt, but there was in it something quiet that froze the blood. He put his hand down and pressed a finger on the place where the left boot, endeavoring to be fashionable, was not quite comfortable.

"Id 'urds you dere," he said. "Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect. Drash!" And then, as if something had given way within him, he spoke long and bitterly. It was the only time I ever heard him discuss the conditions and hardships of his trade.

"Dey get id all," he said, "dey get id by adverdisement, nod by work. Dey dake it away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to this—bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets less—you will see." And looking at his lined face I saw things I had never noticed before, bitter things and bitter struggle—and what a lot of gray hairs there seemed suddenly in his red beard!

As best I could, I explained the circumstances of the purchase of those ill-omened boots. But his face and voice made so deep impression that during the next few minutes

I ordered many pairs. Nemesis fell! They lasted more terribly than ever. And I was not able conscientiously to go to him for nearly two years.

When at last I went I was surprised to find that outside one of the two little windows of his shop another name was painted, also that of a bootmaker—making, of course, for the Royal Family. The old familiar boots, no longer in dignified isolation, were huddled in the single window. Inside, the now contracted well of the one little shop was more scented and darker than ever. And it was longer than usual, too, before a face peered down, and the tip-tap of the bast slippers began. At last he stood before me, and, gazing through those rusty iron spectacles, said:

“Mr. —, isn’d it?”

“Ah! Mr. Gessler,” I stammered, “but your boots are really *too* good, you know! See, these are quite decent still!” And I stretched out to him my foot. He looked at it.

“Yes,” he said, “beople do nod wand good boods, id seems.”

To get away from his reproachful eyes and voice I hastily remarked: “What have you done to your shop?”

He answered quietly: “Id was too exbensif. Do you wand some boods?”

I ordered three pairs, though I had only wanted two, and quickly left. I had, I do not know quite what feeling of being part, in his mind, of a conspiracy against him; or not perhaps so much against him as against his idea of boot. One does not, I suppose, care to feel like that; for it was again many months before my next visit to his shop, paid, I remember, with the feeling: “Oh! well, I can’t leave the old boy—so here goes! Perhaps it’ll be his elder brother!”

For his elder brother, I knew, had not character enough to reproach me, even dumbly.

And, to my relief, in the shop there did appear to be his elder brother, handling a piece of leather.

"Well, Mr. Gessler," I said, "how are you?"

He came close, and peered at me.

"I am breddy well," he said slowly; "but my elder brudder is dead."

And I saw that it was indeed himself—but how aged and wan! And never before had I heard him mention his brother. Much shocked, I murmured: "Oh! I am sorry!"

"Yes," he answered, "he was a good man, he made a good bood; but he is dead." And he touched the top of his head, where the hair had suddenly gone as thin as it had been on that of his poor brother, to indicate, I suppose, the cause of death. "He could nod ged over losing de oder shop. Do you wand any boods?" And he held up the leather in his hand: "Id's a beaudiful biece."

I ordered several pairs. It was very long before they came—but they were better than ever. One simply could not wear them out. And soon after that I went abroad.

It was over a year before I was again in London. And the first shop I went to was my old friend's. I had left a man of sixty, I came back to one of seventy-five, pinched and worn and tremulous, who genuinely, this time, did not at first know me.

"Oh! Mr. Gessler," I said, sick at heart; "how splendid your boots are! See, I've been wearing this pair nearly all the time I've been abroad; and they're not half worn out, are they?"

He looked long at my boots—a pair of Russia leather,

and his face seemed to regain steadiness. Putting his hand on my instep, he said:

"Do dey vid you here? I 'ad drouble wid dat bair, I remember."

I assured him that they had fitted beautifully.

"Do you wand any boods?" he said. "I can make dem quickly; id is a slack dime."

I answered: "Please, please! I want boots all round—every kind!"

"I will make a vresh model. Your food must be bigger." And with utter slowness, he traced round my foot, and felt my toes, only once looking up to say:

"Did I dell you my brudder was dead?"

To watch him was painful, so feeble had he grown; I was glad to get away.

I had given those boots up, when one evening they came. Opening the parcel, I set the four pairs in a row. Then one by one I tried them on. There was no doubt about it. In shape and fit, in finish and quality of leather, they were the best he had ever made me. And in the mouth of one of the Town walking-boots I found his bill. The amount was the same as usual, but it gave me quite a shock. He had never before sent it in till quarter day. I flew down-stairs, and wrote a cheque, and posted it at once with my own hand.

A week later, passing the little street, I thought I would go in and tell him how splendidly the new boots fitted. But when I came to where his shop had been, his name was gone. Still there, in the window, were the slim pumps, the patent leathers with cloth tops, the sooty riding boots.

I went in, very much disturbed. In the two little shops

—again made into one—was a young man with an English face.

“Mr. Gessler in?” I said.

He gave me a strange, ingratiating look.

“No, sir,” he said, “no. But we can attend to anything with pleasure. We’ve taken the shop over. You’ve seen our name, no doubt, next door. We make for some very good people.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “but Mr. Gessler?”

“Oh!” he answered; “dead.”

“Dead! But I only received these boots from him last Wednesday week.”

“Ah!” he said; “a shockin’ go. Poor old man starved ’imself.”

“Good God!”

“Slow starvation, the doctor called it! You see he went to work in such a way! Would keep the shop on; wouldn’t have a soul touch his boots except himself. When he got an order, it took him such a time. People won’t wait. He lost everybody. And there he’d sit, goin’ on and on—I will say that for him—not a man in London made a better boot! But look at the competition! He never advertised! Would ’ave the best leather, too, and do it all ’imself. Well, there it is. What could you expect with his ideas?”

“But starvation——!”

“That may be a bit flowery, as the sayin’ is—but I know myself he was sittin’ over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see I used to watch him. Never gave ’imself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don’t know. He regular

let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots."

"Yes," I said, "he made good boots."

And I turned and went out quickly, for I did not want that youth to know that I could hardly see.

PRUE¹

ALICE MEYNELL (1850-1922)

From *Essays*, 1914.

From meager evidence Mrs. Meynell, with her usual unpretentious charm, re-creates the character of Mrs. Dick Steele and makes her live. Nevertheless, only so much is there as to prod the imagination to complete the portrait.

Through the long history of human relations, which is the history of the life of our race, there sounds at intervals the clamour of a single voice which has not the tone of oratory, but asks, answers, interrupts itself, interrupts—what else? Whatever else it interrupts is silence; there are pauses, but no answers. There is the jest without the laugh, and again the laugh without the jest. And this is because the letters written by Madame de Sévigné were all saved, and not many written to her; because Swift burnt the letters that were the dearest things in life to him, while “MD”² both made a treasury of his; and because Prue kept all the letters which Steele wrote to her from their marriage-day onwards, and Steele kept none of hers.

In Swift's case the silence is full of echoes; that is to say, his letters repeat the phrases of Stella's and Dingley's, to

¹ Used with courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons, the authorized publishers.

² My dears,—Swift's symbol for Stella Johnson and her companion, Mrs. Dingley.

play with them, flout them, and toss them back against the two silenced voices. He never lets the word of these two women fall to the ground; and when they have but blundered with it, and aimed it wide, and sent it weakly, he will catch it, and play you twenty delicate and expert juggling pranks with it as he sends it back into their innocent faces. So we have something of MD's letters in the "Journal," and this in the only form in which we desire them, to tell the truth; for when Swift gravely saves us some specimens of Stella's wit, after her death, as she spoke them, and not as he mimicked them, they make a sorry show.

In many correspondences, where one voice remains and the other is gone, the retort is enough for two. It is as when, the other day, the half of a pretty quarrel between nurse and child came down from an upper floor to the ears of a mother who decided that she need not interfere. The voice of the undaunted child it was that was audible alone, and it replied, "I'm not; *you* are"; and anon, "I'll tell *yours*." Nothing was really missing there.

But Steele's letters to Prue, his wife, are no such simple matter. The turn we shall give them depends upon the unheard tone whereto they reply. And there is room for conjecture. It has pleased the more modern of the many spirits of banter to supply Prue's eternal silence with the voice of a scold. It is painful to me to complain of Thackeray; but see what a figure he makes of Prue in "Esmond." It is, says the nineteenth-century humourist, in defence against the pursuit of a jealous, exacting, neglected, or evaded wife that poor Dick Steele sends those little notes of excuse: "Dearest Being on earth, pardon me if you do not see me till eleven o'clock, having met a schoolfellow from India"; "My

dear, dear wife, I write to let you know I do not come home to dinner, being obliged to attend some business abroad, of which I shall give you an account (when I see you in the evening), as becomes your dutiful and obedient husband"; "Dear Prue, I cannot come home to dinner. I languish for your welfare"; "I stay here in order to get Tonson to discount a bill for me, and shall dine with him to that end"; and so forth. Once only does Steele really afford the recent humourist the suggestion that is apparently always so welcome. It is when he writes that he is invited to supper to Mr. Boyle's, and adds: "Dear Prue, do not send after me, for I shall be ridiculous." But even this is to be read not ungracefully by a well-graced reader. Prue was young and unused to the world. Her husband, by the way, had been already married; and his greater age makes his constant deference all the more charming.

But with this one exception, Steele's little notes, kept by his wife while she lived, and treasured after her death by her daughter and his, are no record of the watchings and dodgings of a London farce. It is worth while to remember that Steele's dinner, which it was so often difficult to eat at home, was a thing of midday, and therefore of mid-business. But that is a detail. What is desirable is that a reasonable degree of sweetness should be attributed to Prue; for it was no more than just. To her Steele wrote in a dedication: "How often has your tenderness removed pain from my aching head, how often anguish from my afflicted heart. If there are such beings as guardian angels, they are thus employed. I cannot believe one of them to be more good in inclination, or more charming in form, than my wife."

True, this was for the public; but not so were these

daily notes; and these carry to her his assurance that she is "the beautifullest object in the world. I know no happiness in this life in any degree comparable to the pleasure I have in your person and society." "But indeed, though you have every perfection, you have an extravagant fault, which almost frustrates the good in you to me; and that is, that you do not love to dress, to appear, to shine out, even at my request, and to make me proud of you, or rather to indulge the pride I have that you are mine." The correction of the phrase is finely considerate.

Prue cannot have been a dull wife, for this last compliment is a reply, full of polite alacrity, to a letter from her asking for a little flattery. How assiduously, and with what a civilized absence of uncouthness, of shamefacedness, and of slang of the mind, with what simplicity, alertness, and finish, does he step out at her invitation, and perform! She wanted a compliment, though they had been long married then, and he immediately turned it. This was no dowdy Prue.

Her request, by the way, which he repeats in obeying it, is one of the few instances of the other side of the correspondence—one of the few direct echoes of that one of the two voices which is silent.

The ceremony of the letters and the deferent method of address and signature are never dropped in this most intimate of letter-writing. It is not a little depressing to think that in this very form and state is supposed, by the modern reader, to lurk the stealthiness of the husband of farce, the "rogue." One does not like the word. Is it not clownish to apply it with intention to the husband of Prue? He did not pay, he was always in difficulties, he hid from bailiffs, he

did many other things that tarnish honour, more or less, and things for which he had to beg Prue's special pardon; but yet he is not a fit subject for the unhandsome incredulity which is proud to be always at hand with an ironic commentary on such letters as his.

I have no wish to bowdlerize Sir Richard Steele, his ways and words. He wrote to Prue at night when the burgundy had been too much for him, and in the morning after. He announces that he is coming to her "within a pint of wine." One of his gayest letters—a love-letter before the marriage, addressed to "dear lovely Mrs. Scurlock"—confesses candidly that he had been pledging her too well: "I have been in very good company, where your health, under the character of the woman I loved best, has been often drunk; so that I may say that I am dead drunk for your sake, which is more than *I die for you*."

Steele obviously drank burgundy wildly, as did his "good company"; as did also the admirable Addison, who was so solitary in character and so serene in temperament. But no one has, for this fault, the right to put a railing accusation into the mouth of Prue. Every woman has a right to her own silence, whether her silence be hers of set purpose or by accident. And every creature has a right to security from the banterings peculiar to the humourists of a succeeding age. To every century its own ironies, to every century its own vulgarities. In Steele's time they had theirs. They might have rallied Prue more coarsely, but it would have been with a different rallying. Writers of the nineteenth century went about to rob her of her grace.

She kept some four hundred of these little letters of her lord's. It was a loyal keeping. But what does Thackeray

call it? His word is "thrifty." He says: "There are four hundred letters of Dick Steele's to his wife, which that thrifty woman preserved accurately."

"Thrifty" is a hard word to apply to her whom Steele styled, in the year before her death, his "charming little insolent." She was ill in Wales, and he, at home, wept upon her pillow, and "took it to be a sin to go to sleep." Thrifty they may call her, and accurate if they will; but she lies in Westminster Abbey, and Steele called her "your Prueship."

IMAGINATION¹

GEORGE SANTAYANA (1863—

From *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*, 1922.

With the philosopher Santayana one finds himself in the realm of abstract thought. He shows us that imagination, vague as it may be, is an animating force without which the world indeed would prove to be a dull and stagnant place.

Men are ruled by imagination: imagination makes them into men, capable of madness and of immense labours. We work dreaming. Consider what dreams must have dominated the builders of the Pyramids—dreams geometrical, dreams funereal, dreams of resurrection, dreams of outdoing the pyramid of some other Pharaoh! What dreams occupy that fat man in the street, toddling by under his shabby hat and bedraggled rain-coat? Perhaps he is in love; perhaps he is a Catholic, and imagines that early this morning he has partaken of the body and blood of Christ; perhaps he is a revolutionist, with the millennium in his heart and a bomb in his pocket. The spirit bloweth where it listeth; the wind of inspiration carries our dreams before it and constantly refashions them like clouds. Nothing could be madder, more irresponsible, more dangerous than this guidance of men by dreams. What saves us is the fact that our imaginations, groundless and chimerical as they may seem, are secretly suggested and controlled by

¹ Used with the courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons, the authorized publishers.

shrewd old instincts of our animal nature, and by continual contact with things. The shock of sense, breaking in upon us with a fresh irresistible image, checks wayward imagination and sends it rebounding in a new direction, perhaps more relevant to what is happening in the world outside.

When I speak of being governed by imagination, of course I am indulging in a figure of speech, in an ellipsis; in reality we are governed by that perpetual latent process within us by which imagination itself is created. Actual imaginings—the cloud-like thoughts drifting by—are not masters over themselves nor over anything else. They are like the sound of chimes in the night; they know nothing of whence they came, how they will fall out, or how long they will ring. There is a mechanism in the church tower; there was a theme in the composer's head; there is a beadle who has been winding the thing up. The sound wafted to us, muffled by distance and a thousand obstacles, is but the last lost emanation of this magical bell-ringing. Yet in our dream it is all in all; it is what first entertains and absorbs the mind. Imagination, when it chimes within us, apparently of itself, is no less elaborately grounded; it is a last symptom, a rolling echo, by which we detect and name the obscure operation that occasions it; and not this echo in its aesthetic impotence, but the whole operation whose last witness it is, receives in science the name of imagination, and may be truly said to rule the human world.

This extension of names is inevitable although unfortunate, because language and perception are poetical before they become scientific, if they ever do; as Aristotle observes that the word anger is used indifferently for two different things: dialectically, or as I call it, imaginatively, for the

desire for revenge, but physically for a boiling of the humours. And utterly different as these two things are in quality, no great inconvenience results from giving them the same name, because historically they are parts of the same event. Nature has many dimensions at once, and whenever we see anything happen, much else is happening there which we cannot see. Whilst dreams entertain us, the balance of our character is shifting beneath: we are growing while we sleep. The young think in one way, the drunken in another, and the dead not at all; and I imagine—for I have imagination myself—that they do not die because they stop thinking, but they stop thinking because they die. How much veering and luffing before they make that port! The brain of man, William James used to say, has a hair-trigger organization. His life is terribly experimental. He is perilously dependent on the oscillations of a living needle, imagination, that never points to the true north.

There are books in which the footnotes, or the comments scrawled by some reader's hand in the margin, are more interesting than the text. The world is one of these books. The reciprocal interference of magnetic fields (which I understand is the latest conception of matter) may compose a marvelous moving pattern; but the chief interest to us of matter lies in its fertility in producing minds and presenting recognizable phenomena to the senses; and the chief interest of any scientific notion of its intrinsic nature lies in the fact that, if not literally true, it may liberate us from more misleading conceptions. Did we have nothing but electrical physics to think of, the nightmare would soon become intolerable. But a hint of that kind, like a hasty glance into the crater of a volcano, sends a wholesome shudder through

our nerves; we realize how thin is the crust we build on, how mythical and remote from the minute and gigantic scale of nature are the bright images we seem to move among, all cut out and fitted to our human stature. Yet these bright images are our natural companions, and if we do not worship them idolatrously nor petrify them into substances, forgetting the nimble use of them in mental discourse, which is where they belong, they need not be more misleading to us, even for scientific purposes, than are words or any other symbols.

It is fortunate that the material world, whatever may be its intrinsic structure or substance, falls to our apprehension into such charming units. There is the blue vault of heaven, there are the twinkling constellations, there are the mountains, trees, and rivers, and above all those fascinating unstable unities which we call animals and persons; magnetic fields I am quite ready to believe them, for such in a vast vague way I feel them to be, but individual bodies they will remain to my sensuous imagination, and dramatic personages to my moral sense. They, too, are animate: they, too, compose a running commentary on things and on one another, adding their salacious footnotes to the dull black letter of the world. Many of them are hardly aware of their own wit; knowing they are but commentators, they are intent on fidelity and unconscious of invention. Yet against their will they gloss everything, willy-nilly we are all scholiasts together. Heaven forbid that I should depreciate this prodigious tome of nature, or question in one jot or tittle the absolute authority of its Author; but it is like an encyclopedia in an infinite number of volumes, or a directory with

the addresses of everybody that ever lived. We may dip into it on occasion in search of some pertinent fact, but it is not a book to read; its wealth is infinite, but so is its monotony; it is not composed in our style nor in our language, we could not have written one line of it. Yet the briefest text invites reflection, and we may spin a little homily out of it in the vernacular for our own edification.

In the *Mahabharata*, a learned friend tells me, a young champion armed for the combat and about to rush forward between the two armies drawn up in battle array, stops for a moment to receive a word of counsel from his spiritual adviser—and that word occupies the next eighteen books of the epic; after which the battle is allowed to proceed. These Indian poets had spiritual minds, they measured things by their importance to the spirit, not to the eye. They despised verisimilitude and aesthetic proportion; they despised existence, the beauties of which they felt exquisitely nevertheless, and to which their imagination made such stupendous additions. I honour their courage in bidding the sun stand still, not that they might thoroughly vanquish an earthly enemy, but that they might wholly clarify their own soul. For this better purpose the sun need not stand still materially. For the spirit, time is an elastic thing. Fancy is quick and brings the widest vistas to a focus in a single instant. After the longest interval of oblivion and death, it can light up the same image in all the greenness of youth; and if cut short, as it were at Pompeii, in the midst of a word, it can, ages after, without feeling the break, add the last syllable. Imagination changes the scale of everything, and makes a thousand patterns of the woof of nature, with-

out disturbing a single thread. Or rather—since it is nature itself that imagines—it turns to music what was only strain; as if the uinversal vibration, suddenly ashamed of having been so long silent and useless, had burst into tears and laughter at its own folly, and in so doing had become wise.

A CHAIR OF NONSENSE¹

BURGES JOHNSON (1877—

From *As I Was Saying*, 1923.

Burges Johnson, as writer, editor, and teacher, has seen a great deal of both sense and nonsense. Here he argues whimsically for nonsense. A chair of nonsense? After a count of the uses to which it can be put, one realizes that some such device for propagating this leaven of life is not so silly as it first appears to be.

“Don’t burn any of the old books. A man craves a certain amount of nonsense. Some of the most unmitigated nonsense I know was originally written down as sense, and I was made to study it.”

—EPHRAIM STEBBINS.

It is easy to talk sense! As babies we link up words into sentences that express reasonable ideas. It is true that the human animal in his primitive days, before he has come into his lingual heritage, often babbles in words of his own creation; or for a year or two shapes old words into strange uninherited phrases. “My dear, the child is talking nonsense!” Sometimes he croons his nonsense to tunes—nonsense tunes—of his own making. But all this is an art that he soon forgets and too often never regains.

¹ Used with the kind permission of the author, Burges Johnson.

Yes, it is easy for grown-ups to talk sense; quite as easy as for you now to retort, "Well then, why don't you do it?" Man's more obvious thoughts have all been formulated so many times that they have taken unto themselves fixed forms of expression which our tongues can instantly utter in response to the slightest impulse. "How do you do?" "Many happy returns of the day," "Trust in an overruling Providence," "Truth is stranger than fiction," "It's all for the best." These are easy to say and easy to listen to, because the tasks of formulation and interpretation were performed long ago by those pioneers who did our thinking for us.

So dominated are we by a reasonable world that it is not only easy to talk sense, but hard to talk nonsense. Try to talk pure nonsense and willy-nilly (a great-great-great-grandfather of a phrase is Willy-Nilly) you find yourself conveying a meaning! The very effort to avoid the conventional symbols of thought is forcing upon you a most unusual form of mental activity.

Whether axioms and maxims and other crystallized forms of common sense be a symptom or a disease, inevitably they increase as the race grows older and lazier, and everything gets to be said. It is high time that we should attack them by a powerful antidote. With this aim in mind I propose the establishment of Chairs of Nonsense in our colleges and universities—those innermost sanctuaries of the Accepted Truth and the Undisputed Thing. And I stipulate that there should be courses offered to teachers as well as to students.

The ideal university, we are told, is Mark Hopkins at one end of the log and a boy at the other—wisdom on one

side of the desk, inquiry and challenge on the other. If wisdom becomes arbitrary, challenge becomes impertinent and useless. If challenge ceases, wisdom deteriorates into dull formula. But a little Nonsense on that log, and what a difference!

"We know what Lewis Carroll was in daily life," writes Gilbert Chesterton: "he was a singularly serious and conventional don, universally respected, but very much of a pedant and something of a Philistine. Thus his strange double life in earth and in dreamland emphasizes the idea that lies at the back of nonsense—the idea of *escape*, of escape into a world where things are not fixed horribly in an eternal appropriateness, where apples grow on pear-trees, and any odd man you meet may have three legs. Lewis Carroll, living one life in which he would have thundered morally against anyone who walked on the wrong plot of grass, and another life in which he would cheerfully call the sun green and the moon blue, was, by his very divided nature, his one foot on both worlds, a perfect type of the position of modern nonsense. His Wonderland is a country populated by insane mathematicians. We feel the whole is an escape into a world of masquerade; we feel that if we could pierce their disguises, we might discover that Humpty Dumpty and the March Hare were Professors and Doctors of Divinity enjoying a mental holiday."

Escape!—the word is crowded with joyous suggestion—escape and revolt. Listen to Algernon Charles Swinburne escaping from the slavery of dull poetic sense:

*"From the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn through
a notable nimbus of nebulous moonshine,
Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower that flickers
with fear of the flies as they float,
Are they looks of our lovers that lustrously lean from a mar-
vel of mystic miraculous moon shine,
These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that thicken
and threaten with sobs from the throat?"*

And hear Bishop Corbet escaping from theology in the seventeenth century:

*"Like to the fiery tombstone of a cabbage,
Or like a crab-louse with its bag and baggage,
Or like the four-square circle of a ring,
Or like to hey ding, ding-a, ding-a, ding;
E'en such is he who spake, and yet, no doubt,
Spake to small purpose, when his tongue was out."*

"He must be a fool indeed who cannot at times play the fool; and he who does not enjoy nonsense must be lacking in sense," wrote Rolfe, the great Shakespearean scholar. "None but a man of extraordinary talent," said DeQuincey, "can write first-rate nonsense." It is easy to prove that great men of all times have found in nonsense a refreshment of mind or a challenging test of mental vitality. Wisdom, grown wiser than its own formulas, turns from introspection in healthful outbursts of self-contempt. Nonsense is in fact perpetually challenging Sense. "It's better not to know so much than to know so many things that ain't so," says

Josh Billings defiantly. "Truth is stranger than fiction," says Old Saw. "It is, to most people," says Mark Twain.

*"I never nursed a dear gazelle,"
softly quotes Tom Hood,
"To glad me with its dappled hide,
But when it came to know me well,
It fell upon the buttered side."*

"Think!" cries Nonsense. "Your common sense is clogging the machinery of ratiocination; your axioms soft-pedal the vibrating strings of the mind." Thoughts are not stimulated by any final statement of concrete fact; they are set at rest. But a statement which apparently means nothing at all will at once set them going.

In attempting to justify my chair of Nonsense I am not content to quote DeQuincey or Samuel Johnson or Lord Tennyson in praise of it, or to cite the fact that Ruskin placed Edward Lear at the head of his list of one hundred best books. But we must scrutinize the subject-matter itself and find in nonsense intrinsic values sufficient to entitle it to a place beside the Dead Languages, Higher Mathematics, Household Economics, Paleontology, and others of that sacred company.

First of all, Nonsense bears some peculiar and mysterious relationship to Truth. Perhaps it is fourth dimensional truth. Perhaps it is the truth of to-morrow; undoubtedly, if Professor Einstein's theories hold good, many of the truths of to-day are nonsense. Perhaps it is truth upside down, and classes must stand on their heads to study it. Greater sacrifices have been made in the pursuit of wisdom.

But my theory is that Nonsense embraces All-Truth, even as infinitude embraces the universe. All of the sermons worth preaching could find their texts in Mother Goose, or in Lear, or in those other Bibles, the Alice books. Mr. Don Marquis, in a recent essay extolling the virtues of nursery rhymes, says that he himself forever thinks of royalty in terms of the King who was in his counting house and the Queen who ate bread and honey. And I dare say that the Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe has wielded upon rising generations an indirect influence compared to which Froebel is negligible. Students might well devote much time to the study of Madam Goose to discover what it is that makes her sayings applicable to all sorts and conditions, generation after generation. Is it merely her simplicity of utterance—a lost art with so many of us—that gives her a cryptic and subtle sound? Edward Lear testified that he had a most difficult time, after he wrote his Nonsense Books, trying to prove that they were not political pamphlets, or at least satires upon current life and manners. Hundreds of readers were certain that they knew personally the “Dong with the Luminous Nose.”

It occurs to me that nonsense does not mean anything in particular because it means everything. If this is the case, what other field offers so great opportunities for endless research? “What is it that I mean?” wrote Charles Battell Loomis:

*“What is it that I mean,
Oh, potent soul of mine?
Oh, ecstasy divine
In luscious meadows green!”*

*"When from the void of things
(What is it that I mean?)
I sense the joys unseen
And memory backward flings;*

*"When I encounter doubt
And flee th' unquiet scene—
(What is it that I mean?)
Friend, hast thou found me out?*

*"A charnel house at e'en,
A dusky, reddened sky,
A tomb where none is nigh—
(What IS it that I mean?")*

This questioning spirit is the basis of all true education. But it must be questioning in perfect honesty of heart; and where is there less evasion and equivocation than in nonsense?

*"Not understood? Take me hence! Take me yonder!
Take me away to the land of my rest—
There where the Ganges and other gees wander,
And uncles and antelopes act for the best,
And all things are mixed and run into each other
In a violet twilight of virtues and sins,
With the church-spires below you and no one to show you
Where the curate leaves off and the pew-rent begins!"*

So writes Barry Pain, and W. S. Gilbert echoes, in a burst of perfect frankness:

*"His gentle spirit rolls
In the melody of souls,
Which is pretty but I don't know what it means."*

Neither do I know what it means, but surely that does not prove it valueless; for I recall that in my own college days, as I painfully struggled through the pages of the "Anabasis," I was assured that I should value the experience in after life not for the information which Xenophon had written down, but for the mental training which I had gained in trying to find out what he meant. Why then, in all of these impressive curricula—set forth in many pages of college catalogues—is there no course deliberately entitled, "Nonsense, Its Literature, Its Uses, and Its Philosophy?" True, now and again some such course exists fortuitously, but its conductor is probably a prophet unawares.

May I be permitted finally to base my appeal for my Chair of Nonsense upon the established arguments of the upholders of higher education as it is? If the Curriculum Committee will but know that nonsense is the chaos out of which all truth was created they will at once grant that an intensive study of its elements may be a means finally of discovering the very secret of life; at any rate let them think of the mental training acquired by the student in trying to find out.

That a straight line, for instance, is the shortest distance between two points is a statement containing one truth, and one only. What a regrettable paucity of content! Think of those beautiful lines of the Icelandic poet as set down by George Ade:

*"To hold is not to have—
 Under the seared firmament
 Where Chaos sweeps, and vast Futurity
 Sneers at these puny Aspirations—
 There is the full Reprisal."*

In this statement there may be a thousand truths, for all I know. The fact that I cannot point out any of them at the present moment of writing is not in the least significant. But I am somehow reminded of my own early metrical interpretations of the ancient poets. Doubtless any one skilled in the examination of undergraduate literal translations could gain something from it at a single glance.

Certain apologists for our higher education measure everything in terms of service. All studies are of value in so far as they teach man to know his fellow man. Then let Nonsense establish herself triumphantly. I may utter sense to a passing stranger and we pass on as strangers—but let me recite nonsense to him, and at once our relationship becomes positive. A common knowledge of current literature makes conversation at afternoon teas. An equal acquaintance with Egyptian scarabs makes for envy, hatred and all malice. But the discovery of a common familiarity with "Sylvia and Bruno" and "Gentle Alice Brown" will cause two hearts to beat as one. "Don't tell me," said William Pitt, "of a man's being able to talk sense. Everyone can talk sense. Can he talk nonsense?"

I have discovered that if Jones's conversation consists of nothing but a succession of exact truths, I do not necessarily get to know Jones. I merely get to know the truths.

But if Jones says something which means nothing at all, I feel that I must know him better. If Robinson tells me all his exact symptoms since he was sick, I know the symptoms, and do not need to know the man. If he offers to tell me how he was since before he was sick, I study him with an aroused curiosity.

We devote the best years of our youth to an examination of the wisdom of the dead, in order that we may better know the living. Why should we not, then, more systematically immerse the minds of our young in a wholly confusing penumbra of ideas, and let them work their way out by natural processes of mental creation into All-Knowledge?

THE JUNGLE SLUGGARD¹

WILLIAM BEEBE (1877-

From *Jungle Days*, 1925.

Explorer of the depths of the sea and the depths of the jungle, William Beebe comes forth with vivid descriptions of nature's wonders and oddities. After a perusal of "The Jungle Sluggard" one will never doubt the appropriateness of the creature's name.

Sloths have no right to be living on the earth today; they would be fitting inhabitants of Mars, where a year is over six hundred days long. In fact they would exist more appropriately on a still more distant planet where time—as we know it—creeps and crawls instead of files from dawn to dusk. Years ago I wrote that sloths reminded me of nothing so much as the wonderful Rath Brother athletes or of a slowed-up moving picture, and I can still think of no better similes.

Sloths live altogether in trees, but so do monkeys, and the chief difference between them would seem to be that the latter spend their time pushing against gravitation while the sloths pull against it. Botanically the two groups of animals are comparable to the flower which holds its head up to the sun, swaying on its long stem, and, on the other hand, the over-ripe fruit dangling heavily from its base. We ourselves are physically far removed from sloths—for a

¹ Copyright, 1925, by William Beebe. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

while we can point with pride to the daily achievement of those ambulatory athletes, floor-walkers and policemen, yet no human being can cling with his hands to a branch for more than a comparatively short time.

Like a rainbow before breakfast, a sloth is a surprise, an unexpected fellow breather of the air of our planet. No one could prophesy a sloth. If you have an imaginative friend who has never seen a sloth and ask him to describe what he thinks it ought to be like, his uncontrolled phrases will fall far short of reality. If there were no sloths, Dunsany would hesitate to put such a creature in the forests of Mluna, Marco Polo would deny having seen one, and Munchausen would whistle as he listened to a friend's description.

A scientist—even a taxonomist himself—falters when he mentions the group to which a sloth belongs. A taxonomist is the most terribly accurate person in the world, dealing with unvarying facts, and his names and descriptions of animals defy discretion, murder imagination. Nevertheless when next you see a taxonomist disengaged, approach him boldly and ask him in a tone of quarrelsome interest to what order of Mammalia sloths belong. If an honest conservative he will say, "Edentata," which, as any ancient Greek will tell you, means a toothless one. Then if you wish to enrage and nonplus the taxonomist, which I think no one should, as I am one myself, then ask him Why? or, if he has ever been bitten by any of the eighteen teeth of a sloth?

The great savant Buffon in spite of all his genius, fell into most grievous error in his estimation of a sloth. He says, "The inertia of this animal is not so much due to laziness as to wretchedness; it is the consequence of its faulty struc-

ture. Inactivity, stupidity, and even habitual suffering result from its strange and ill-constructed conformation. Having no weapons for attack or defense, no mode of refuge even by burrowing, its only safety is in flight. . . . Everything about it shows its wretchedness and proclaims it to be one of those defective monsters, those imperfect sketches, which Nature has sometimes formed, and which, having scarcely the faculty of existence, could only continue for a short time and have since been removed from the catalogue of living beings. They are the last possible term amongst creatures of flesh and blood, and any further defect would have made their existence impossible."

If we imagine the dignified French savant himself, naked, and dangling from a lofty jungle branch in the full heat of the tropic sun, without water and with the prospect of nothing but coarse leaves for breakfast, dinner and all future meals, an impartial on-looker who was ignorant of man's normal haunts and life could very truthfully apply to the unhappy scientist, Buffon's own comments. All of his terms of opprobrium would come home to roost with him.

A bridge out of place would be an absolutely inexplicable thing, as would a sloth in Paris, or a Buffon in the trees. As a matter of fact it was only when I became a temporary cripple myself that I began to appreciate the astonishing lives which sloths lead. With one of my feet injured and out of commission I found an abundance of time in six weeks to study the individuals which we caught in the jungle nearby. Not until we invent a superlative of which the word "deliberate" is the positive can we define a sloth with sufficient adequateness and briefness. I dimly remember certain volumes by an authoress whose style pictured the hero

walking from the door to the front gate, placing first the right, then the left foot before him as he went. With such detail and speed of action might one write the biography of a sloth.

Ever since man has ventured into this wilderness, sloths have aroused astonishment and comment. Four hundred years ago Gonzala de Oviedo sat him down and penned a most delectable account of these creatures. He says, in part: "There is another strange beast the Spaniards call the Light Dogge, which is one of the slowest beasts and so heavie and dull in mooving that it can scarcely goe fiftie pases in a whole day. Their neckes are high and streight, and all equall like the pestle of a mortar, without making any proportion of similitude of a head, or any difference except in the noddle, and in the tops of their neckes. They have little mouthes, and moove their neckes from one side to another, as though they were astonished: their chiefe desire and delight is to cleave and sticke fast unto Trees, whereunto cleaving fast, they mount up little by little, staying themselves by their long claws. Their voice is much differing from other beasts, for they sing only in the night, and that continually from time to time, singing ever six notes one higher than another. Sometimes the Christian men find these beasts, and bring them home to their houses, where also they creepe all about with their natural slownesse. I could never perceive other but that they love onely of Aire: because they ever turne their heads and mouthes toward that part where the wind blowest most, whereby may be considered that they take most pleasure in the Aire. They bite not, nor yet can bite, having very little mouthes: they are not venemous or noyous any way, but altogether brutish, and utterly un-

profitable and without commoditie yet known to men."

It is difficult to find adequate comparisons for a topsyturvy creature like a sloth, but if I had already had synthetic experience with a Golem, I would take for a formula the general appearance of an English sheep dog, giving it a face with barely distinguishable features and no expression, an inexhaustible appetite for a single kind of coarse leaf, a gamut of emotions well below the animal kingdom, and an enthusiasm for life excelled by a healthy sunflower. Suspend this from a jungle limb by a dozen strong hooks, and—you would still have to see a live sloth to appreciate its appearance.

At rest, curled up into an arboreal ball, a sloth is indistinguishable from a cluster of leaves; in action, the second hand of a watch often covers more distance. At first sight of the shapeless ball of hay, moving with hopeless inadequacy, astonishment shifts to pity, then to impatience and finally, as we sense a life of years spent thus, we feel almost disgust. At which moment the sloth reaches blindly in our direction, thinking us a barren, leafless, but perhaps climable tree, and our emotions change again, this time to sheer delight as a tiny infant sloth raises its indescribably funny face from its mother's breast and sends forth the single tone, the high, whistling squeak, which in sloth intercourse is song, shout, converse, whisper, argument and chant. Separating him from his mother is like plucking a bur from one's hair, but when freed, he contentedly hooks his small self to our clothing and creeps slowly about.

Instead of reviewing all the observations and experiments which I perpetrated upon sloths, I will touch at once the heart of their mysterious psychology, giving in a few

words a conception of their strange, uncanny minds. A bird will give up its life in defending its young; an alligator will not often desert its nest in the face of danger; a male stickle-back fish will intrepidly face any intruder that threatens its eggs. In fact, at the time when the young of all animals are at the age of helplessness, the senses of the parents are doubly keen, their activities and weapons are at greatest efficiency for guarding of the young and the consequent certainty of the continuance of their race.

The resistance made by a mother sloth to the abstraction of its offspring is chiefly the mechanical tangling of the young animal's tiny claws in the long maternal fur. I have taken away a young sloth and hooked it to a branch five feet away. Being hungry it began at once to utter its high, penetrating penny whistle. To no other sound, high or low, with even a half tone's difference does the sloth pay any heed, but its dim hearing is attuned to just this vibration. Slowly the mother starts off in what she thinks is the direction of the sound. It is the moment of moments in the life of the young animal. Yet I have seen her again and again on different occasions pass within two feet of the little chap, and never look to right or left, but keep straight on, stolidly and unvaryingly to the high jungle, while her baby, a few inches out of her path, called in vain. No kidnapped child hidden in mountain fastness or urban underworld was ever more completely lost to its parent than this infant, in full view and separated by only a sloth's length of space.

A gun fired close to the ear of a sloth will usually arouse not the slightest tremor; no scent of flower or acid or carrion causes any reaction; a sleeping sloth may be shaken violently without awakening, the waving of a scar-

let rag, or a climbing serpent a few feet away brings no gleam of curiosity or fear to the dull eyes; an astonishingly long immersion in water produces discomfort but not death. When we think what a constant struggle life is to most creatures, even when they are equipped with the keenest of senses and powerful means of offense, it seems incredible that a sloth can hold its own in this overcrowded tropical jungle.

From birth to death it climbs slowly about the great trees, leisurely feeding, languidly loving, and almost mechanically caring for its young. On the ground a host of enemies await it, but among the higher branches it fears chiefly occasional great boas, climbing jaguars and, worst of all, the mighty talons of harpy eagles. Its means of offense is a joke—a slow, ineffective reaching forward with open jaws, a lethargic stroke of arm and claws which anything but another sloth can avoid. Yet the race of sloths persists and thrives, and in past years I have had as many as eighteen under observation at one time.

A sloth makes no nest or shelter; it even disdains the protection of dense foliage. But for all its apparent helplessness it has a *cheval-de-frise* of protection which many animals far above it in intelligence might well envy. Its outer line of defense is invisibility—and there is none better, for until you have seen your intended prey you can neither attack nor devour him. No hedgehog or armadillo ever rolled a more perfect ball of itself than does a sloth, sitting in a lofty, swaying crotch with head and feet and legs all gathered close together inside. This posture, to an onlooker, destroys all thought of a living animal, but presents a very satisfactory white ants' nest or bunch of dead leaves. If we

look at the hair of a sloth we will see small, grey patches along the length of the hairs—at first sight bits of bark and débris of wood. But these minute, scattered particles are of the utmost aid to this invisibility. They are a peculiar species of alga or lichen-like growth which is found only in this peculiar haunt, and when the rains begin and all the jungle turns a deep, glowing emerald, these tiny plants also react to the welcome moisture and become verdant—thus throwing over the sloth a protecting, misty veil of green.

Even we dull-sensed humans require neither sight nor hearing to detect the presence of an animal like the skunk; in the absolute quiet and blackness of midnight we can tell when a porcupine has crossed our path, or when there are mice in the bureau drawers. But a dozen sloths may be hanging to the trees near at hand and never the slightest whiff of odor comes from them. A baby sloth has not even a baby smell, and all this is part of the cloak of invisibility. The voice, raised so very seldom, is so ventriloquil, and possesses such a strange, unanimal-like quality that it can never be a guide to the location much less to the identity of the author. Here we have three senses, sight, hearing, smell, all operating at a distance, two of them by vibrations, and all leagued together to shelter the sloth from attack.

But in spite of this dramatic guard of invisibility the keen eyes of an eagle, the lapping tongue of a giant boa, and the amazing delicacy of a jaguar's sense of smell break through at times. The jaguar scents sign under the tree of the sloth, climbs eagerly as far as he dares and finds ready to his paw the ball of animal unconsciousness; a harpy eagle half a mile above the jungle sees a bunch of leaves reach out a sleepy arm and scratch itself—something clumps of leaves

should not do. Down spirals the great bird, slowly, majestically, knowing there is no need of haste, and alights close by the mammalian sphere. Still the sloth does not move, apparently waiting for what fate may bring—waiting with the patience and resignation which comes only to those of our fellow creatures who cannot say, “I am I!”. It seems as if Nature had deserted her jungle changeling, stripped now of its protecting cloak.

The sloth however has never been given credit for its powers of passive resistance, and now, with its enemy within striking distance, its death or even injury is far from a certainty. The crotch which the sloth chooses for its favorite outdoor sport, sleep, is usually high up or far out among the lesser branches, where the eight claws of the eagle or the eighteen of a jaguar find but precarious hold. In order to strike at the quiescent animal the bird has to relinquish half its foothold, the cat nearly one quarter. If the victim were a feathery bush turkey or a soft-bodied squirrel, one stroke would be sufficient, but this strange creature is something far different. In the first place it is only to be plucked from its perch by the exertion of enormous strength. No man can seize a sloth by the long hair of the back and pull it off. So strong are its muscles, so vise-like the grip of its dozen talons that either the crotch must be cut or broken off or the long claws unfastened one by one. Neither of these alternatives is possible to the attacking cat or eagle. They must depend upon crushing or penetrating power of stroke or grasp.

Here is where the sloth's second line of defense becomes operative. First, as I have mentioned, the swaying branch and dizzy height is in his favor, as well as his immovable

grip. To begin with the innermost defenses, while his jungle fellows, the ring-tailed and red howling monkeys, have thirteen ribs, the sloth may have as many as twenty; in the latter animal they are, in addition, unusually broad and flat, slats rather than rods. Next comes the skin which is so thick and tough that many an Indian's arrow falls back without even scratching the hide. The skin of the unborn sloth is as tough and strong as that of a full-grown monkey. Finally we have the fur—two distinct coats, the under one fine, short and matted, the outer long, harsh and coarse. Is it any wonder that, teetering on a swaying branch, many a jaguar has had to give up after frantic attempts to strike his claws through the felted hair, the tough skin and the bony lattice-work which protect the vitals of this Edentate bur!

Having rescued our sloth from his most immediate peril let us watch him solve some of the very few problems which life presents to him. Although the cecropia tree, on the leaves of which he feeds, is scattered far and wide through the jungle, yet sloths are found almost exclusively along river banks, and, most amazingly, they not infrequently take to the water. I have caught a dozen sloths swimming rivers a mile or more in width. Judging from the speed of short distances, a sloth can swim a mile in three hours and twenty minutes. Their thick skin and fur must be a protection against crocodiles, electric eels and perai fish as well as jaguars. Why they should ever wish to swim across these wide expanses of water is as inexplicable as the migration of butterflies. One side of the river has as many comfortable crotches, as many millions of cecropia leaves and as many eligible lady sloths as the other! In this unreasonable desire

for anything which is out of reach sloths come very close to a characteristic of human beings.

Even in the jungle sloths are not always the static creatures which their vegetable-like life would lead us to believe, as I was able to prove many years ago. A young male was brought in by Indians and after keeping it a few days I shaved off two patches of hair from the center of the back, and labelling it with a metal tag I turned it loose. Forty-eight days later it was captured near a small settlement of bovian-ders several miles farther up and across the river. During this time it must have traversed four miles of jungle and one of river.

The principal difference between the male and female three-toed sloths is the presence on the back of the male of a large, oval spot of orange-colored fur. To any creature of more active mentality such a minor distinction must often be embarrassing. In an approaching sloth, walking upside-down as usual, this mark is quite invisible, and hence every meeting of two sloths must contain much of delightful uncertainty, of ignorance whether the encounter presages courtship or merely gossip. But color or markings have no meaning in the dull eyes of these animals. Until they have sniffed and almost touched noses they show no recognition or reaction whatever.

I once invented a sloth island—a large circle of ground surrounded by a deep ditch, where sloths climbed about some saplings and ate, but principally slept, and lived for months at a time. This was within sight of my laboratory table, so I could watch what was taking place by merely raising my head. Some of the occurrences were almost too

strange for creatures of this earth. I watched two courtships, each resulting in nothing more serious than my own amusement. A female was asleep in a low crotch, curled up into a perfect ball deep within which was esconced a month-old baby. Two yards overhead was a male who had slept for nine hours without interruption. Moved by what, to a sloth, must have been a burst of uncontrollable emotion, he slowly unwound himself and clambered downward. When close to the sleeping beauty he reached out a claw and tentatively touched a shoulder. Even more deliberately she excavated her head and long neck and peered in every direction but the right one. At last she perceived her suitor and looked away as if the sight was too much for her. Again he touched her post-like neck, and now there arose all the flaming fury of a mother at the flirtatious advances of this stranger. With incredible slowness and effort she freed an arm, deliberately drew it back and then began a slow forward stroke with arm and claws. Meanwhile her gentleman friend had changed his position so the blow swept, or, more correctly passed, through empty air, the lack of impact almost throwing her out of the crotch. The disdained one left with slowness and dignity—or had he already forgotten why he had descended?—and returned to his perch and slumber, where I am sure, not even such active things as dreams came to disturb his peace.

The second courtship advanced to the stage where the Gallant actually got his claws tangled in the lady's back hair before she awoke. When she grasped the situation she left at once and clambered to the highest branch tip followed by the male. Then she turned and climbed down and across her annoyer, leaving him stranded on the lofty branch look-

ing eagerly about and reaching out hopefully toward a big, green iguana asleep on the next limb in mistake for his fair companion. For an hour he wandered languidly after her, then gave it up and went to sleep. Throughout these and other emotional crises no sound is ever uttered, no feature altered from its stolid repose. The head moves mechanically and the dull eyes blink slowly, as if striving to pierce the opaque veil which ever hangs between the brain of a sloth and the sights, sounds and odors of this tropical world. If the orange back spot was ever of any use in courtship, in arousing any emotion aesthetic or otherwise, it must have been in ages long past when the ancestors of sloths, contemporaries of their gigantic relatives the Mylodons, had better eyesight for escaping from sabre-toothed tigers, than there is need today.

The climax of a sloth's emotion has nothing to do with the opposite sex or with the young, but is exhibited when two females are confined in a cage together. The result is wholly unexpected. After sniffing at one another for a moment, they engage in a slowed-up moving-picture battle. Before any harm is done one or the other gives utterance to the usual piercing whistle and surrenders. She lies flat on the cage floor and offers no defense while the second female proceeds to claw her, now and then attempting, usually vainly, to bite. It is so unpleasant that I have always separated them at this stage, but there is no doubt that in every case the unnatural affray would go on until the victim was killed. In fact I have heard of several instances where this actually took place.

A far pleasanter sight is the young sloth, one of the most adorable balls of fuzzy fur imaginable. While the sense of

play is all but lacking his trustfulness and helplessness are most infantile. Every person who takes him up is an accepted substitute for his mother and he will clamber slowly about one's clothing for hours in supreme contentment. One thing I can never explain is that on the ground the baby is even more helpless than his parents. While they can hitch themselves along, body dragging, limbs outspread, until they reach the nearest tree, a young sloth is wholly without power to move. Placed on a flat bit of ground it rolls and tumbles about, occasionally greatly encouraged by seizing hold of its own foot or leg under the impression that at last it has encountered a branch.

Sloths sleep about twice as much as other mammals and a baby sloth often gets tired of being confined in the heart of its mother's sleeping sphere, and creeping out under her arm will go on an exploring expedition around and around her. When over two weeks old it has strength to rise on its hind legs and sway back and forth like nothing else in the world. Its eyes are only a little keener than those of the parent and it peers up at the foliage overhead with the most pitiful interest. It is slowly weaned from a milk diet to the leaves of the cecropia which the mother at first chews up for her offspring.

I once watched a young sloth about a month old and saw it leave its mother for the first time. As the old one moved slowly back and forth, pulling down cecropia leaves and feeding on them, the youngster took firm grip on a leaf stem, mumbling at it with no success whatever. When finally it stretched around and found no soft fur within reach it set up a wail which drew the attention of the mother at once. Still clinging to her perch, she reached out a forearm to an

unbelievable distance and gently hooked the great claws about the huddled infant, which at once climbed into the hollow awaiting it.

When a very young sloth is gently disentangled from its mother and hooked on to a branch something of the greatest interest happens. Instead of walking forward, one foot after the other, and upside-down as all adult sloths do, it reaches up and tries to get first one arm then the other *over* the support, and to pull itself into an upright position. This would seem to be a reversion to a time—perhaps millions of years ago—when the ancestors of sloths had not yet begun to hang inverted from the branches. After an interval of clumsy reaching and wriggling about, the baby by accident grasps its own body or limb, and, in this case, convinced that it is at last anchored safely again to its mother, it confidently lets go with all its other claws and tumbles ignominiously to the ground.

The moment a baby sloth dies and slips from its grip on the mother's fur, it ceases to exist for her. If it could call out she would reach down an arm and hook it toward her, but simply dropping silently means no more than if a disentangled bur had fallen from her coat. I have watched such a sloth carefully and have never seen any search of her own body or of the surrounding branches, or a moment's distraction from sleep or food. An imitation of the cry of the dead baby will attract her attention, but if not repeated she forgets it at once.

It is interesting to know of the lives of such beings as this—chronic pacifists, normal morons, the superlative of negative natures, yet holding their own amidst the struggle for existence. Nothing else desires to feed on such coarse

fodder, no other creature disputes with it the domain of the under side of branches, hence there is no competition. From our human point of view sloths are degenerate; from another angle they are among the most exquisitely adapted of living beings. If we humans, together with our brains, fitted as well into the possibilities of our own lives we should be infinitely finer and happier,—and, besides, I should then be able to interpret more intelligently the life and the philosophy of sloths!

SCIENCE AND THE FAITH OF THE MODERN¹

EDWIN GRANT CONKLIN (1863—

From *Scribner's Magazine*, 1925.

Dr. Conklin, one of the most eminent of modern biologists, has done much to bring to the understanding of the layman the recent advances in science and the ultimate interdependence of all knowledge. See how in this essay he deftly employs evolution to reconcile issues which to some minds seem contradictory.

A book was published in this country bearing the striking title, *Science Remaking the World*. Fourteen well-known scholars contributed chapters on subjects ranging all the way from electrons to evolution, from industries to food, medicine, and public health, all showing how man is gaining control over his environment. But science is remaking the world in much more fundamental ways than in these practical and material respects. It is remaking not only the outer world in which we live, but also the inner world of our thoughts and ideals. It has brought about the greatest intellectual revolution in human history, a revolution that concerns the origin, nature, and destiny of man himself—and thoughtful men everywhere are inquiring what the results are likely to be.

Many distinguished authors, scientists, philosophers, and theologians have attempted recently to analyze present tend-

¹ Used with the kind permission of the author, Edwin Grant Conklin.

encies and to forecast the future, with the results that range all the way from ecstatic visions of optimists to the dismal lucubrations of pessimists. Apostles of sweetness and light and eternal progress have been more than matched by the "Gloomy Dean"; Haldane and Thomson have been answered by Russell and Schiller. Ancient mythologies have been revived in the titles of modern Sibylline Books that set forth the future of mankind as symbolized by Daedalus, Icarus, Tantalus, and Prometheus.

Many advocates of the old philosophy and theology of supernaturalism and tradition attribute the present disturbed state of the world to science, which they say has been undermining the old foundations of the social order, and they call upon all men everywhere to repent and to return to the old faith. On the other hand, many advocates of science and the new knowledge maintain that for persons of mature minds, the old, naïve faith of childhood and of the childhood age of the race is gone, and gone forever, and that the only hope for the progress of mankind lies in more knowledge, newer and better faith, and not in a return to old beliefs.

Let us briefly compare some aspects of the old faith and the new knowledge and then inquire what is the duty of forward-looking men in this age of intellectual, social, and religious unrest.

The old cosmogony, philosophy, and theology sought comfort, satisfaction, and inspiration rather than unwelcome truth. It magnified man by making him the climax and goal of all creation. It placed the earth, man's home, at the center of the universe. The sun, moon, and stars were created to give light to the earth. All things were made to minister to man's welfare. Man himself was created in the image of God,

perfect and immortal. By his first disobedience he fell from his high estate and

Brought death into the world and all our woe.

But the promise was given that ultimately evil should perish and good should triumph. The great Drama of Humanity ran from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, from initial perfection to final perfection.

In this old philosophy and theology supernaturalism was universal; there was no proper conception of nature and of natural law. The earth was peopled not only with godlike men but also with manlike gods, angels, spirits, witches, demons. Some supernatural being was responsible for every phenomenon. The movements of sun and stars, the return of the seasons, wind and rain, lightning and rainbow, volcanoes and earthquakes, plagues and pestilences, were willed by some supernatural being. All nature was the expression of wills, big or little, good or bad.

The old ethics was based primarily on the will of God, supernaturally revealed in code or book, and to this certain rules were added from time to time by Church or State under divine guidance. Right was what God approved, wrong was what He forbade, and if ever doubts arose with regard to these there were not lacking those who would interpret the will of God. Man himself was a free moral agent. No bonds of heredity or necessity rested on his mind or soul. He was the architect of his own character, the arbiter of his own destiny. All good was the result of good will, all evil of evil will, and good would be rewarded and evil punished either in this life or in an eternal life of bliss or torment.

There was enormous satisfaction in this view of the uni-

verse and of man. It not only glorified man, explained evil, and promised redemption, but it was a great stimulus to efforts for betterment and a source of high ideals and aspirations, and undoubtedly its commands and sanctions worked powerfully to preserve the ethical code. Furthermore, there was admirable directness and positiveness in the old ethics regarding right and wrong, truth and error, freedom and responsibility, rewards and punishments. There was no hazy middle ground between these, no relativity of truth or right or duty to confuse the mind. Things were absolutely true or false, completely right or wrong. This old faith with its specific commandments was especially well suited to immature minds. In the childhood of the individual and of the race there is need of authority and obedience before it is possible to appeal to reason. Childhood is predominantly the age of obedience, adolescence of imitation and example, maturity of reason and judgment. The results of permitting children to grow up as their nature and judgments dictate are perilous for the children and annoying to the neighbors. One such harassed neighbor asked the mother of some children of nature how she expected them to become civilized, and she said, "Oh, we are relying on the germ plasm"; upon which the unscientific neighbor eagerly asked: "Where do you get it?"

Heredity, or the germ plasm, determines only the capacities and potentialities of any organism. In every individual there are many capacities that remain undeveloped because of the lack of stimuli suitable to call them forth. These inherited potentialities are both good and bad, social and antisocial, and it is the purpose of education to develop the former and to suppress the latter. In the heredity of every

human being there are many alternative personalities. Education is chiefly habit formation, and good education consists in the formation of good habits of body, mind, and morals. It is the duty of parents and teachers to guide children in this respect, to replace unreason by reason, selfishness by unselfishness, and antisocial habits by social ones. To trust to germ plasm is to forget that heredity furnishes capacities for evil as well as for good, and to disregard the universal experience of mankind.

Society is compelled to repress many of the primordial reactions and instincts of the natural man. Our whole culture rests upon the suppression of antisocial impulses and the cultivation of social and moral reactions. If such reactions are to be built into character and become "second nature," they must be cultivated early, preferably in the home, and ethical teaching must be clear-cut and authoritative. The old ethics, when wisely inculcated, was admirably suited to this purpose. It did develop men and women of high moral character, and to a large extent it forms the foundation of our present social systems.

Contrast with this older philosophy, theology, and ethics the newer revelations of science. The man of scientific mind seeks truth rather than comfort or satisfaction. He would follow evidence wherever it leads, confident that even unwelcome truth is better than cherished error, that the permanent welfare of the human race depends upon "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men," and that truth alone can make us free. Science is not an esoteric cult and scientific methods are not mysterious or magical processes. Huxley once defined science as trained and organized common sense, and scientific methods of inquiry are only

the careful and accurate methods that are used by intelligent people everywhere in the affairs of everyday life. These methods consist in observation, comparison, analysis, and generalization. Every sensible person uses these methods in his business or profession, and in his judgments of men, policies, and institutions. It is only in its greater accuracy that the scientific method differs from those in universal use. It is true that no scientific observation, comparison, analysis, or generalization is ever complete or perfect; it is true that in science, as well as in all affairs of life, we deal with probabilities of a higher or lower order rather than with certainties; it is true that all generalizations are theories rather than facts and that all scientific knowledge is relative and not absolute. But in spite of these limitations, no other method of inquiry has been found as reliable as the scientific method.

It would seem incredible, were it not an actual fact, that anyone should object to the use of such methods of inquiry regarding the origin and nature of man, society, government, ethics, religion, the Bible, or anything else; but, alas! there are thousands, if not millions, of people in this country, some of them educated and intelligent with respect to things with which they have had experience, who refuse to apply common-sense methods of inquiry to such subjects, who characterize those who do this as atheists, blasphemers, dishonest scoundrels, and who denounce science and scientists for laying impious hands on sacred things which must never be studied by the methods of common sense.

To those who refuse to apply scientific methods of inquiry to the study of man and society, cosmogony and theology, ethics and religion, but who base their whole conception of these upon ancient traditions or unreasoning emo-

tions, science has no message; they neither understand the language nor appreciate the methods of science. But to the increasing number of those who recognize that man, society, and human institutions are proper subjects of scientific investigation, and who also realize that neither authority, tradition, nor prejudice is a safe guide in the search for truth, the question may well arise as to what effect the scientific study of these subjects will have on human ideals, aspirations, and conduct. Accordingly, these remarks are addressed to those only who accept the methods and results of science in their application to man but who are concerned that mankind shall grow not only wiser but also better as the ages pass.

The methods and results of science have shaken to their foundations the old cosmogony and philosophy. It is now universally recognized that the earth is not the center of the universe, but a mere dot in a mediocre solar system whirling through immeasurable space. Man is only one of some millions of species of living things on the earth, and although in mind and soul he is the paragon of animals, it is becoming increasingly certain that the traditional views regarding his supernatural creation and divine perfection are no longer tenable. On the contrary, the sciences of geology, biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology are furnishing an ever-increasing amount of evidence that the body, mind, and society of man are products of evolution. The old philosophy of universal supernaturalism is giving place to a philosophy of universal naturalism; everything that has been scientifically analyzed is found to be natural—that is, orderly, lawful, causal—and many men of science claim that “nature is everything that is.” Belief in an anthropomorphic God, a

big man in the skies who made us little men in His own image, established society, ethics, and religion by His commands, and governs the world as a human autocrat, is rapidly yielding place to more idealistic conceptions.

It appears probable that the universe and man are subject to immutable natural laws; that causality is universal in the living as well as in the lifeless world; that the entire man, body, mind, and soul, develops from a germ and is the product of heredity and environment; that will itself is no exception to universal causality, since it is merely a link in the chain of cause and effect, being itself the effect of preceding causes and the cause of succeeding effects; that freedom is the result of intelligence acting as cause; that intelligence is the capacity of consciously profiting by experience; that instincts and emotions are causally related to body functions; that society, ethics, and even religion are based primarily on instincts, emotions, reaction patterns, and ductless glands.

Some of these conclusions are tentative and may be modified by further research, but there can be no doubt as to the general trend of the scientific study of man and his activities. These conclusions, or others of a similar nature, are now accepted by most of the recent investigators in human biology, psychology, and sociology. The application of science and the scientific method of observation and experiment to human behavior has revealed much concerning the physiology of mind as well as the hidden springs of action, the unconscious complexes that determine our constitutional hopes and fears, our prevailing loves and hates, our delusions and failures, and "the sin which doth so easily beset us." Recent studies indicate that there is also a physiology of ethics, and that our conceptions of right and wrong, of good

and bad, are associated with particular body functions, reaction patterns, and instincts. In short, man himself, in all of his manifold complexities and activities, is a part of Nature.

These studies and conclusions have raised serious apprehensions on the part of many friends of science and violent opposition on the part of some adherents of the old order, who hold that the guesses of "science falsely so-called" are destroying the foundations of religion, ethics, and all that is most valuable in human life. On the other hand, many Christian scientists who have been convinced by the evidence of the essential truth of these new discoveries are equally certain that truth and goodness and beauty, faith and hope and love, reverence and aspirations and ideals are just as real and as desirable as they ever were, and that religion and ethics remain secure whether the old traditions stand or not.

There can be no doubt that science has given us grander conceptions of the universe than were ever dreamed of in former times. Contrast the old cosmogony with the revelations of modern astronomy, physics, and geology; the old conception of the creation of the universe in six literal days with our present conceptions of the immensity and eternity of natural processes; the old views of the special creation by a supernatural Workman of every one of a million different species of animals and plants, beasts of prey and their victims, parasites and pests, with the scientific view that animals and plants and the universe itself are the results of an immensely long process of evolution!

Even in its revelations concerning man, science is giving us not only truer but also grander views than the old ones. There is sublimity in the conception of man as the climax of

vast ages of evolution, as the highest and best product of this eternal process, as the promise of something better still to be. The evolution of man from lower forms of life is not degrading but inspiring. Nature and human history love to proclaim the fact that a humble origin does not preclude a glorious destiny. "The real dignity of man consists not in his origin, but in what he is and in what he may become."

So far as the substitution of natural law for chance or caprice is concerned it has been a great gain not only in our conceptions of the world but also with regard to our inmost selves, for it means order instead of chaos, understanding in place of confusion. If all our activities are the results of natural causation, it means that the will is not absolutely free, but practical people have always known that freedom is relative and not absolute; that we are partly free and partly bound. We know that we are able to inhibit many reactions, instincts, and forms of behavior and to choose between alternatives that are offered. But this does not mean that such freedom is uncaused activity; on the contrary, science shows that it is the result of internal causes, such as physiological states, conflicting stimuli, the remembered results of past experience or education, all of which are themselves the results of preceding causes. Conscious will is not "a little deity encapsuled in the brain" but intelligence acting as cause, while intelligence in turn is the capacity of consciously profiting by experience.

But however we may explain that which we call *freedom*, it is plain that for practical purposes it exists, though in varying degrees in different persons or in the same person at different times, and that it entails a corresponding degree of *responsibility*. The universality of natural law does not

destroy ethics or the basis of ethics; on the contrary, it places morality upon a natural, causal, understandable basis. Furthermore, it leads to a more rational view of human behavior and to a more sympathetic attitude toward the criminal or the offender. As long as men regarded nonethical conduct as the result of absolutely free will, or of an evil spirit within man, it was logical enough to exorcise the demon by torture and in general to "make the punishment fit the crime" rather than make it fit the criminal. But an understanding of the fact that nonethical conduct is causal rather than capricious and is the result of natural rather than supernatural causation leads society to look for and to correct these causes rather than to seek vengeance or retribution. Indeed, the only justification for punishment of any kind is the correction of the offender or the protection of society; there is no longer any place in civilized society or in a rational theology for retributive or expiatory punishment.

A study of human history and prehistory shows that there has been a wonderful development of ethics and of religion. There is no satisfactory evidence that these were handed down from heaven in perfect form, but there is abundant evidence that they, in common with all other things, have been evolving and that this process has not yet come to an end. Much of the ethics and religion of the Old Testament was condemned by Christ and would not be tolerated in civilized society today. Some of the ethical codes and religious practices current today will probably be considered barbarous in times to come.

Variations and mutations are the materials of the evolutionary process and they occur in all possible directions; some of them are progressive, many are retrogressive, but

only those that are fit survive. The present is apparently a period of great social, ethical, and religious mutation, and many of these are certainly retrogressive; but let us hope that the decent instincts and the common sense of mankind will see to it that these retrogressive mutations do not survive.

Whatever the ultimate basis of ethics may be, whether divine commands, intuitions and instincts, utility or pleasure, the content remains essentially the same: however much codes and practices may change, our ideals and instincts remain much the same from age to age. Whether written on tables of stone or on the tables of our hearts, the "cardinal virtues" are still virtues and the "deadly sins" are still sins. The deepest instincts of human nature cry out for justice, truth, beauty, sympathy. Ethics that is based on pleasures of the highest and most enduring sort, on pleasures of the rational mind, the better instincts, refined senses, is not different from the ethics of the divine command to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." These are "the enduring satisfactions of life." The new ethics of science does not essentially differ in content from the old ethics of revelation, and the commandments of a God within are no less binding than those of a God without.

Nevertheless, the decline of faith in the supernatural origin of man and of ethics, the decreasing fear of hell or hope of heaven, and the increased freedom of thought and action brought about by science and education have led, in some instances, to a general weakening of the ethical code. When increasing freedom carries with it an increasing sense of responsibility and duty it never endangers progress, but when liberty degenerates into license it marks the beginning

of social and moral decay. Freedom is one of the principal goals of human endeavor, but the best use man can make of his freedom is to place limitations upon it. We can be safely freed from external restraints only in so far as we replace these by internal inhibitions.

Partly as a result of this increased freedom from the old restraints, but largely as one of the terrible aftermaths of the World War, lawlessness, immorality, and selfishness seem to be more than usually evident throughout the world today. The war gave social sanction to murder, arson, and theft; it unchained the wild beasts in men that long had been restrained; it glorified acts which in times of peace would have been abhorred; and it is no wonder that we are now reaping the whirlwind. Grafters in high office and bandits in high-powered cars are preying on society. Lawlessness and selfishness are widespread. Social solidarity has diminished; races and nations are suspicious or antagonistic; many political parties, churches, labor unions, social classes are split up into warring factions. Jealousy, suspicion, intolerance, hate, and war are preached from some pulpits and from many platforms and presses. The war that we fondly hoped was to end wars has apparently only ended peace.

The new freedom which recently has come to women, and which is in the main a progressive change, has led to some bizarre views in these later days. Some of its radical advocates are demanding that it shall mean freedom from all sex distinctions and restraints, except such as are purely personal and voluntary—freedom from marriage and reproduction and the care of children; abolition of the family with its cares and responsibilities; state subsidies for such women as are willing to be mothers and state infantoria for the rear-

ing of all children. Less extreme and therefore more dangerous tendencies are seen in the acceptance of pleasure as the sole basis of ethics and the interpretation of the ethics of pleasure as the satisfaction of animal appetites for food, drink, and sex. The reaction from undue sex repression has led to the opposite extreme of sex exploitation. Obscene literature and plays are not only tolerated but justified and patronized by many leaders of public opinion. In several universities student publications have been suppressed recently by the authorities because of indecency or blasphemy. Free love, trial marriage, easy divorce are widely preached and practiced. We vigorously condemn and forbid polygamy in Utah but easily condone worse practices nearer home. The question of the old catechism, "What is the chief end of man?" is now answered by multitudes of people: "To glorify pleasure and enjoy it while it lasts." They say frankly: "I have but one life to live and I propose to get the most pleasure possible out of it. Why should I think of social progress or of posterity? What has posterity done for me? Let us eat, drink, and be merry—for tomorrow we die." Yes, persons who live as mere animals die as the beast dieth; they deserve no immortality on earth or anywhere else. Whether we believe in religion or not, our better instincts revolt against such ethics. We are more than brutes and cannot be satisfied with the pleasures of brutes. We may not accept the old ethics of supernaturalism and tradition, but we cannot adopt the ethics of pigs and hyenas.

What is the remedy for this condition? Fundamentalists think that science in general, biology in particular, and the theory of human evolution most of all are responsible. They would, therefore, prescribe by law that the latter may not be

taught in tax-supported institutions. But if state legislatures are to decide that evolution shall not be taught, they should also eliminate the teaching of all subjects which furnish evidences of the truth of evolution; they should forbid the teaching of morphology, physiology, ecology, paleontology, genetics, comparative medicine, comparative psychology, and sociology. Indeed, there are few subjects that are now studied and taught by comparative and genetic methods that should not be banned. If the farmers of Tennessee and Kentucky can decide what may be taught in biology, they can also decide what may be taught in mathematics, as indeed one sufferer from interminable decimals proposed when he introduced a bill to fix by law the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle at exactly 3.

I have been assured by persons who are very orthodox in faith but very heterodox in spelling and grammar, that "Evolution is all rot"; that it is "leprocy" (*sic*); that "the heads of evolutionists are full of mud" (their own, of course, being full of "monkey"); and that "God hath chosen the fools of this world to confound the wise," leaving it in doubt as to who is which. Mr. Bryan's characterization of scientists as "dishonest scoundrels" shows the same unrestrained emotionalism as the antivivisectionists show when they call animal experimenters "inhuman fiends." Antievolution, antivivisection, antivaccination, and antiscience are all the outgrowths of extreme emotionalism, recklessness in handling facts, and an utter ignorance of the value of scientific evidence.

Fundamentalism, if logical, would demand the abolition of the teaching of all science and scientific methods, for science in general and not merely the theory of evolution is

responsible for the loss of faith in the old traditions. It is folly to attempt to promote education and science and at the same time to forbid the teaching of the principal methods and results of science. The only sensible course would be to abolish altogether the teaching of science and scientific methods and to return to ecclesiasticism. The Church once told scientists what they could think and teach, and now state legislatures propose to do it. Such methods of resisting change have always failed in the past and are foredoomed to failure now.

The real problem that confronts us, and it is a great problem, is how to adjust religion to science, faith to knowledge, ideality to reality, for adjustment in the reverse direction will never happen. Facts cannot be eliminated by ideals and it is too late in the history of the world to attempt to refute the findings of science by sentimental objections or supposed theological difficulties. If science makes mistakes, science must furnish the cure; it can never be done by church councils, state legislatures, nor even by popular vote.

The only possible remedy for the present deplorable condition is not less but more and better science and education; science that recognizes that the search for truth is not the whole of life, that both scientific reality and religious ideality are necessary to normal, happy, useful living. We must keep our feet on the ground of fact and science, but lift our heads into the atmosphere of ideals. "To the solid ground of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye." Education from the earliest years must teach love rather than hate, human brotherhood rather than war, service rather than selfishness; it must develop good habits of body and mind;

it must instil reverence, not only for truth but also for beauty and righteousness.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Man cannot live by bread alone; he must have ideals and aspirations, faith and hope and love. In short, he must have a religion. The world never needed a religion of high ideals and aspirations more than it needs it now. But the old religion of literalism and of slavish regard to the authority of church or book, while well suited to some minds, cannot serve the needs of those who have breathed the air of science. Must all such be deprived of the benefits of a religion which they need and be forced into a false position of antagonism to religion as a whole because they cannot accept all the literalism, infantilism, and incidentalism of so-called fundamentalism? The fundamentalists, rather than the scientists, are helping to make this an irreligious age.

Science has destroyed many old traditions but it has not destroyed the foundations of ethics or religion. In some respects it has contributed greatly to these foundations:

1. The universality of natural law has not destroyed faith in God, though it has modified many primitive conceptions of deity. This is a universe of ends as well as of means, of teleology as well as of mechanism. Mechanism is universal but so also is finalism. It is incredible that the system and order of nature, the evolution of matter and worlds and life, of man and consciousness and spiritual ideals are all the results of chance. The greatest exponents of evolution, such as Darwin, Huxley, Asa Gray, and Weismann, have maintained that there is evidence of some governance and plan in Nature. This is the fundamental article of all religious faith. If there

is no purpose in the universe, or in evolution, or in man, then indeed there is no God and no good. But if there is purpose in nature and in human life, it is only the imperfection of our mental vision that leads us sometimes to cry in despair: "Vanitas vanitatum, all is vanity." No one can furnish scientific proof of the existence or nature of God, but atheism leads to pessimism and despair, while theism leads to faith and hope. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

2. Science leaves us faith in the worth and dignity of man. In spite of weakness and imperfection, man is the highest product of a billion years of evolution. We are still children in the morning of time, but we are attaining reason, freedom, spirituality. The ethics of mankind is not the ethics of the jungle or the barnyard. In the new dispensation men will no longer be restrained from evil by fear of hell or hope of heaven, but by their decent instincts and their high ideals. When love of truth, beauty, goodness, of wife, children, humanity dies in us our doom will be sealed. But it will not die in all men; the long-past course of progressive evolution proves that it will live on, somewhere and somehow.

3. Science leaves us hope for the future. Present conditions often seem desperate; pessimists tell us that society is disintegrating, that there will never be a League of Nations, that wars will never cease, that the human race is degenerating, and that our civilization is going the way of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. But though nations have risen and fallen, and cultures have waxed and waned, the major movements of human history have been forward. After civilization had once been attained, it never completely disappeared from the earth. The torch of culture was handed on from Egypt to Greece and from Greece to Rome, and

from all of these to us. One often hears of lost arts and civilizations of the past, but the best elements of any culture are immortal.

The test of biological variations and mutations is whether they lead to increasing fitness, and the test of all social and moral mutations and revolutions, such as those of today, is whether they lead to increasing perfection and progress. The great principle of the survival of the fit has guided evolution from amoeba to man, from tropisms and reflexes to intelligence and consciousness, from solitary individuals to social organizations, from instincts to ethics, and this great principle will not be abrogated today or tomorrow. It is the "power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Man can consciously hasten or hinder this process, but he cannot permanently destroy it. He can refuse to take part in it and can choose to be eliminated, but the past course of evolution for millions of years indicates that somewhere and somehow this process will go on.

The evolutionist is an incorrigible optimist; he reviews a billion years of evolution in the past and looks forward to perhaps another billion years of evolution in the future. He knows that evolution has not always been progressive; that there have been many eddies and back currents, and that the main current has sometimes meandered in many directions; and yet he knows that, on the whole, it has moved forward. Through all the ages evolution has been leading toward the wider intellectual horizons, the broader social outlooks, the more invigorating moral atmosphere of the great sea of truth.

What progress in body, mind, and society; what inventions, institutions, even relations with other worlds, the future may hold in store, it hath not entered into the heart of

man to conceive. What does it matter if some men refuse to join this great march onward, what does it matter if even our species should become extinct if only it give place to a better species! Our deepest instincts are for growth; the joy of life is progress. Only this would make immortality endurable. Human progress depends upon the increase and diffusion among men of both knowledge and ethics, reality and ideality, science and religion. Now for the first time in the history of life on this planet, a species can consciously and rationally take part in its own evolution. To us the inestimable privilege is given to co-operate in this greatest work of time, to have part in the triumphs of future ages. What other aim is so worthy of high endeavor and great endowment?

COMFORT¹

ALDOUS HUXLEY (1894-

From *Proper Studies*, 1927.

"The proper study of mankind is man," quotes Aldous Huxley as the subtitle of his book, and the quotation might appropriately be applied to nearly all of his writing. "Comfort" is a study in behavior. "Don't loll if you want to study," is the old saying. Is it true?

NOVELTY OF THE PHENOMENON

French hotel-keepers call it *Le confort moderne*, and they are right. For comfort is a thing of recent growth, younger than steam, a child when telegraphy was born, only a generation older than radio. The invention of the means of being comfortable and the pursuit of comfort as a desirable end—one of the most desirable that human beings can propose to themselves—are modern phenomena, unparalleled in history since the time of the Romans. Like all phenomena with which we are extremely familiar, we take them for granted, as a fish takes the water in which it lives, not realizing the oddity and novelty of them, not bothering to consider their significance. The padded chair, the well-sprung bed, the sofa, central heating, and the regular hot bath—these and a host of other comforts enter into the daily lives of even the most moderately prosperous of the Anglo-Saxon bour-

¹ Copyright, 1927, by Aldous Huxley. Published by Harper and Brothers. Used with the permission of the author and publishers.

geoisie. Three hundred years ago they were unknown to the greatest kings. This is a curious fact which deserves to be examined and analyzed.

The first thing that strikes one about the discomfort in which our ancestors lived is that it was mainly voluntary. Some of the apparatus of modern comfort is of purely modern invention; people could not put rubber tyres on their carriages before the discovery of South America and the rubber plant. But for the most part there is nothing new about the material basis of our comfort. Men could have made sofas and smoking-room chairs, could have installed bathrooms and central heating and sanitary plumbing any time during the last three or four thousand years. And as a matter of fact, at certain periods they did indulge themselves in these comforts. Two thousand years before Christ, the inhabitants of Cnossos were familiar with sanitary plumbing. The Romans had invented an elaborate system of hot-air heating, and the bathing facilities in a smart Roman villa were luxurious and complete beyond the dreams of the modern man. There were sweating-rooms, massage-rooms, cold plunges, tepid drying-rooms with (if we may believe Sidonius Apollinaris) improper frescoes on the walls and comfortable couches where you could lie and get dry and talk to your friends. As for the public baths they were almost inconceivably luxurious. 'To such a height of luxury have we reached,' said Seneca, 'that we are dissatisfied if, in our baths, we do not tread on gems.' The size and completeness of the *thermae* was proportionable to their splendour. A single room of the baths of Diocletian has been transformed into a large church.

It would be possible to adduce many other examples

showing what could be done with the limited means at our ancestors' disposal in the way of making life comfortable. They show sufficiently clearly that if the men of the Middle Ages and early modern epoch lived in filth and discomfort, it was not for any lack or ability to change their mode of life; it was because they chose to live in this way, because filth and discomfort fitted in with their principles and prejudices, political, moral, and religious.

COMFORT AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

What have comfort and cleanliness to do with politics, morals, and religion? At a first glance one would say that there was and could be no causal connection between armchairs and democracies, sofas and the relaxation of the family system, hot baths and the decay of Christian orthodoxy. But look more closely and you will discover that there exists the closest connection between the recent growth of comfort and the recent history of ideas. I hope in this essay to make that connection manifest, to show why it was not possible (not materially, but psychologically impossible) for the Italian princes of the quattrocento, for the Elizabethan, even for Louis XIV. to live in what the Romans would have called common cleanliness and decency, or enjoy what would be to us indispensable comforts.

Let us begin with the consideration of armchairs and central heating. These, I propose to show, only became possible with the breakdown of monarchical and feudal power and the decay of the old family and social hierarchies. Smoking-room chairs and sofas exist to be lolled in. In a well-made modern armchair you cannot do anything but loll. Now, lolling is neither dignified nor respectful. When we wish to

appear impressive, when we have to administer a rebuke to an inferior, we do not lie in a deep chair with our feet on the mantel-piece; we sit up and try to look majestic. Similarly, when we wish to be polite to a lady or show respect to the old or eminent, we cease to loll; we stand, or at least we straighten ourselves up. Now, in the past human society was a hierarchy in which every man was always engaged in being impressive towards his inferiors or respectful to those above him. Lolling in such societies was utterly impossible. It was as much out of the question for Louis XIV. to loll in the presence of his courtiers as it was for them to loll in the presence of their king. It was only when he attended a session of the Parlement that the King of France ever lolled in public. On these occasions he reclined in the Bed of Justice, while princes sat, the great officers of the crown stood, and the smaller fry knelt. Comfort was proclaimed as the appanage of royalty. Only the king might stretch his legs. We may feel sure, however, that he stretched them in a very majestic manner. The lolling was purely ceremonial and accompanied by no loss of dignity. At ordinary times the king was seated, it is true, but seated in a dignified and upright position; the appearance of majesty had to be kept up. (For, after all, majesty is mainly a question of majestic appearance.) The courtiers, meanwhile, kept up the appearances of deference, either standing, or else, if their rank was very high and their blood peculiarly blue, sitting, even in the royal presence, on stools. What was true of the king's court was true of the nobleman's household; and the squire was to his dependants, the merchant was to his apprentices and servants, what the monarch was to his courtiers. In all cases the superior had to express his superiority by being dignified,

the inferior his inferiority by being deferential; there could be no lolling. Even in the intimacies of family life it was the same: the parents ruled like popes and princes, by divine right; the children were their subjects. Our fathers took the fifth commandment very seriously—how seriously may be judged from the fact that during the great Calvin's theocratic rule of Geneva a child was publicly decapitated for having ventured to strike its parents. Lolling on the part of children, though not perhaps a capital offence, would have been regarded as an act of the grossest disrespect, punishable by much flagellation, starving, and confinement. For a slighter insult—neglect to touch his cap—Vespasiano Gonzaga kicked his only son to death; one shudders to think what he might have been provoked to do if the boy had lolled. If the children might not loll in the presence of their parents, neither might the parents loll in the presence of their children, for fear of demeaning themselves in the eyes of those whose duty it was to honour them. Thus we see that in the European society of two or three hundred years ago it was impossible for any one—from the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France down to the poorest beggar, from the bearded patriarch to the baby—to loll in the presence of any one else. Old furniture reflects the physical habits of the hierarchical society for which it was made. It was in the power of mediaeval and renaissance craftsmen to create armchairs and sofas that might have rivalled in comfort those of to-day. But society being what, in fact, it was, they did nothing of the kind. It was not, indeed, until the sixteenth century that chairs became at all common. Before that time a chair was a symbol of authority. Committee-men now loll, Members of Parliament are comfortably seated, but

authority still belongs to a Chairman, still issues from a symbolical Chair. In the Middle Ages only the great had chairs. When a great man travelled, he took his chair with him, so that he might never be seen detached from the outward and visible sign of his authority. To this day the Throne no less than the Crown is the symbol of royalty. In mediaeval times the vulgar sat, whenever it was permissible for them to sit, on benches, stools, and settles. With the rise, during the Renaissance period, of a rich and independent bourgeoisie, chairs began to be more freely used. Those who could afford chairs sat in them, but sat with dignity and discomfort; for the chairs of the sixteenth century were still very throne-like, and imposed upon those who sat in them a painfully majestic attitude. It was only in the eighteenth century, when the old hierarchies were seriously breaking up, that furniture began to be comfortable. And even then there was no real lolling. Armchairs and sofas on which men (and, later, women) might indecorously sprawl, were not made until democracy was firmly established, the middle classes enlarged to gigantic proportions, good manners lost from out of the world, women emancipated, and family restraints dissolved.

CENTRAL HEATING AND THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

Another essential component of modern comfort—the adequate heating of houses—was made impossible, at least for the great ones of the earth, by the political structure of ancient societies. Plebeians were more fortunate in this respect than nobles. Living in small houses, they were able to keep warm. But the nobleman, the prince, the king, and the cardinal inhabited palaces of a grandeur corresponding with

their social position. In order to prove that they were greater than other men, they had to live in surroundings considerably more than life-size. They received their guests in vast halls like roller-skating rinks; they marched in solemn processions along galleries as long and as draughty as Alpine tunnels, up and down triumphal staircases that looked like the cataracts of the Nile frozen into marble. Being what he was, a great man in those days had to spend a great deal of his time in performing solemn symbolical charades and pompous ballets—performances which required a lot of room to accommodate the numerous actors and spectators. This explains the enormous dimensions of royal and princely palaces, even of the houses of ordinary landed gentlemen. They owed it to their position to live, as though they were giants, in rooms a hundred feet long and thirty high. How splendid, how magnificent! But oh, how bleak! In our days the self-made great are not expected to keep up their position in the splendid style of those who were great by divine right. Sacrificing grandiosity to comfort, they live in rooms small enough to be heated. (And so, when they were off duty, did the great in the past; most old palaces contain a series of tiny apartments to which their owners retired when the charades of state were over. But the charades were long-drawn affairs, and the unhappy princes of old days had to spend a great deal of time being magnificent in icy audience-chambers and among the whistling draughts of interminable galleries.) Driving in the environs of Chicago, I was shown the house of a man who was reputed to be one of the richest and most influential of the city. It was a medium-sized house of perhaps fifteen or twenty smallish rooms. I looked at it in astonishment, thinking of the vast palaces in which I myself have

lived in Italy (for considerably less rent than one would have to pay for garaging a Ford in Chicago). I remembered the rows of bedrooms as big as ordinary ballrooms, the drawing-rooms like railway stations, the staircase on which you could drive a couple of limousines abreast. Noble *palazzi*, where one has room to feel oneself a superman! But remembering also those terrible winds that blow in February from the Apennines, I was inclined to think that the rich man of Chicago had done well in sacrificing the magnificences on which his counterpart in another age and country would have spent his riches.

BATHS AND MORALS

It is to the decay of monarchy, aristocracy, and ancient social hierarchy that we owe the two components of modern comfort hitherto discussed; the third great component—the bath—must, I think, be attributed, at any rate in part, to the decay of Christian morals. There are still on the continent of Europe, and for all I know, elsewhere, convent schools in which young ladies are brought up to believe that human bodies are objects of so impure and obscene a character that it is sinful for them to see, not merely other people's nakedness, but even their own. Baths, when they are permitted to take them (every alternate Saturday) must be taken in a chemise descending well below the knees. And they are even taught a special technique of dressing which guarantees them from catching so much as a glimpse of their own skin. These schools are now, happily, exceptional, but there was a time, not so long ago, when they were the rule. Theirs is the great Christian ascetic tradition which has flowed on in majestic

continuity from the time of St. Anthony and the unwashed, underfed, sex-starved monks of the Thebaid, through the centuries, almost to the present day. It is to the weakening of that tradition that women at any rate owe the luxury of frequent bathing.

The early Christians were by no means enthusiastic bathers; but it is fair to point out that Christian ascetic tradition has not at all times been hostile to baths as such. That the Early Fathers should have found the promiscuity of Roman bathing shocking is only natural. But the more moderate of them were prepared to allow a limited amount of washing, provided that the business was done with decency. The final decay of the great Roman baths was as much due to the destructiveness of the Barbarians as to Christian ascetic objections. During the Ages of Faith there was actually a revival of bathing. The Crusaders came back from the East, bringing with them the oriental vapour bath, which seems to have had a considerable popularity all over Europe. For reasons which it is difficult to understand, its popularity gradually waned, and the men and women of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seem to have been almost as dirty as their barbarous ancestors. Medical theory and court fashions may have had something to do with these fluctuations.

The ascetic tradition was always strongest where women were concerned. The Goncourts record in their diary the opinion, which seems to have been current in respectable circles during the Second Empire, that female immodesty and immorality had increased with the growth of the bath habit. 'Girls should wash less,' was the obvious corollary. Young ladies who enjoy their bath owe a debt of gratitude

to Voltaire for his mockeries, to the nineteenth-century scientists for their materialism. If these men had never lived to undermine the convent school tradition, our girls might still be as modest and as dirty as their ancestresses.

COMFORT AND MEDICINE

It is, however, to the doctors that the bath-lovers owe their greatest debt. The discovery of microbic infection has put a premium on cleanliness. We wash now with religious fervour, like the Hindus. Our baths have become something like magic rites to protect us from the powers of evil, embodied in the dirt-loving germ. We may venture to prophesy that this medical religion will go still further in undermining the Christian ascetic tradition. Since the discovery of the beneficial effects of sunlight, too much clothing has become, medically speaking, a sin. Immodesty is now a virtue. It is quite likely that the doctors, whose prestige among us is almost equal to that of the medicine men among their savages, will have us stark naked before very long. That will be the last stage in the process of making clothes more comfortable. It is a process which has been going on for some time—first among men, later among women—and among its determining causes are the decay of hierarchic formalism and of Christian morality. In his lively little pamphlet describing Gladstone's visit to Oxford shortly before his death, Mr. Fletcher has recorded the Grand Old Man's comments on the dress of the undergraduates. Mr. Gladstone, it appears, was distressed by the informality and the cheapness of the students' clothes. In his day, he said, young men went about with a hundred pounds worth of clothes and jewellery

on their persons, and every self-respecting youth had at least one pair of trousers in which he never sat down for fear of spoiling its shape. Mr. Gladstone visited Oxford at a time when undergraduates still wore very high starched collars and bowler hats. One wonders what he would have said of the open shirts, the gaudily coloured sweaters, the loose flannel trousers of the present generation. Dignified appearances have never been less assiduously kept up than they are at present; informality has reached an unprecedented pitch. On all but the most solemn occasions a man, whatever his rank or position, may wear what he finds comfortable.

The obstacles in the way of women's comforts were moral as well as political. Women were compelled not merely to keep up social appearances, but also to conform to a tradition of Christian ascetic morality. Long after men had abandoned their uncomfortable formal clothes, women were still submitting to extraordinary inconveniences in the name of modesty. It was the war which liberated them from their bondage. When women began to do war work, they found that the traditional modesty in dress was not compatible with efficiency. They preferred to be efficient. Having discovered the advantages of immodesty, they have remained immodest ever since, to the great improvement of their health and increase of their personal comfort. Modern fashions are the most comfortable that women have ever worn. Even the ancient Greeks were probably less comfortable. Their under-tunic, it is true, was as rational a garment as you could wish for; but their outer robe was simply a piece of stuff wound round the body like an Indian *sari*, and fastened with safety-pins. No woman whose appearance depended on safety-pins can ever have felt really comfortable.

COMFORT AS AN END IN ITSELF

Made possible by changes in the traditional philosophy of life, comfort is now one of the causes of its own further spread. For comfort has now become a physical habit, a fashion, an ideal to be pursued for its own sake. The more comfort is brought into the world, the more it is likely to be valued. To those who have known comfort, discomfort is a real torture. And the fashion which now decrees the worship of comfort is quite as imperious as any other fashion. Moreover, enormous material interests are bound up with the supply of the means of comfort. The manufacturers of furniture, of heating apparatus, of plumbing fixtures, cannot afford to let the love of comfort die. In modern advertisement they have means for compelling it to live and grow.

Having now briefly traced the spiritual origins of modern comfort, I must say a few words about its effects. One can never have something for nothing, and the achievement of comfort has been accompanied by a compensating loss of other equally, or perhaps more, valuable things. A man of means who builds a house to-day is in general concerned primarily with the comfort of his future residence. He will spend a great deal of money (for comfort is very expensive: in America they talk of giving away the house with the plumbing) on bathrooms, heating apparatus, padded furnishings, and the like; and having spent it, he will regard his house as perfect. His counterpart in an earlier age would have been primarily concerned with the impressiveness and magnificence of his dwelling—with beauty, in a word, rather than comfort. The money our contemporary would spend on baths and central heating would have been spent in the

past on marble staircases, a grand façade, frescoes, huge suites of gilded rooms, pictures, statues. Sixteenth-century popes lived in a discomfort that a modern bank manager would consider unbearable; but they had Raphael's frescoes, they had the Sistine chapel, they had their galleries of ancient sculpture. Must we pity them for the absence from the Vatican of bathrooms, central heating, and smoking-room chairs? I am inclined to think that our present passion for comfort is a little exaggerated. Though I personally enjoy comfort, I have lived very happily in houses devoid of almost everything that Anglo-Saxons deem indispensable. Orientals and even South Europeans, who know not comfort and live very much as our ancestors lived centuries ago, seem to get on very well without our elaborate and costly apparatus of padded luxury. I am old-fashioned enough to believe in higher and lower things, and can see no point in material progress except in so far as it subserves thought. I like labour-saving devices, because they economize time and energy which may be devoted to mental labour. (But then I enjoy mental labour; there are plenty of people who detest it, and who feel as much enthusiasm for thought-saving devices as for automatic dishwashers and sewing-machines.) I like rapid and easy transport, because by enlarging the world in which men can live it enlarges their minds. Comfort for me has a similar justification: it facilitates mental life. Discomfort handicaps thought; it is difficult when the body is cold and aching to use the mind. Comfort is a means to an end. The modern world seems to regard it as an end in itself, an absolute good. One day, perhaps, the earth will have been turned into one vast feather-bed, with man's body dozing on top of it and his mind underneath, like Desdemona, smothered.

POETRY IN A MACHINE AGE¹

PAUL ENGLE (1908—

From *The English Journal*, 1937.

Paul Engle, a poet himself, believes that skylarks and nightingales have served the poets long and well, but now, perhaps, an imagery which takes cognizance of a scientific environment might be appropriate. Critics will debate on the degree to which tradition and innovation can blend.

The most evident quality of poetry is intensity—a certain verbal exaggeration. It is that which distinguishes it from prose and from plain speech. It is that which emphasizes what is being said. It is the basis of the pleasure afforded by verse. This intensity is not elaborate description or the piling-up of adjectives. It may be the opposite—a reducing of what is said to its simplest terms, as in the following couplet from Robert Frost:

*I often see flowers from a passing car
That are gone before I can tell what they are.*

Or it may be the bare statement of a fact which, although it has nothing at all added, expresses the fact imaginatively, as does MacLeish's calling of the ocean "that endless silence, edged with unending sound." Or the intensi-

¹ Used with the kind permission of the author, Paul Engle.

fication may be achieved by symbol and figurative language. In these lines from *John Brown's Body* the image is completely obvious and clear:

*Jack Ellyat turned away from the window now,
The frosty sleighbell of winter was in his ears,
He saw the new year, a child in a buffalo-robe.*

The image may be far more subtle, as the lines from the German poet Rilke in which he describes a visit to a small church in pre-revolutionary Russia where he found God crouching in a corner like a wounded and captured animal. Whatever the means of intensification may be, it is always a heightening of the voice, although that may involve a lowering of its sound. It is a lifting of the words like a hand's gesture.

When the vowels and consonants of a line of verse are so skilfully arranged in relation to the sense and to each other that the line seems to vibrate like a taut wire, it is the contribution that this tautness makes to the transference of a certain feeling from one mind into another mind which is important. The sound of the line considered by itself is of less value, however pleasant it may be, than the function it has of emphasizing the meaning through the force of its sound. In this passage from *Conquistador* the swing of the lines makes clearer the feeling in the mind of the writer, thinking of the armored Spaniards who came in their pride and were killed by stone and arrow:

*Those with the glaze in their eyes and the fine bearing:
The born leaders of men: the resonant voices:*

*They give them the lands for their tombs: they call it
America.*

It is the mood of the mind, and the accuracy with which the verse reproduces it—the attitude toward a thing and not the thing itself—which is the real concern of poetry. Bettors on horse races call this attitude a hunch because it has not been reached rationally, but intuitively. It is for the telling about these hunches that rhythms and forms of verse exist. It is Carl Sandburg writing “See the trees lean to the wind’s way of learning” instead of “See the wind bend the trees.”

If a poet’s business, then, is to communicate his own mind in an intelligible and intensified language, how is the saying that a poet is “representative of his times” to be explained? What is a man like who is, in his verse, representative of today? How has living in a machine age affected the position of a poet who is trying to tell about the excitements in his head?

A poet cannot repudiate his age. If he tries to do so, even his repudiation will belong to it. He is a part of all his environment, both that which he unconsciously takes in, as his eyes automatically acknowledge what confronts them, and that which he consciously acquires, as in the study of folklore and psychiatry. Being so integrated to his age, when he comes to talk about his own character in verse, what he says has not only the individual accent of his own voice but also the larger intonation of his times.

Three forces which belong particularly to the twentieth century have altered the conditions of writing poetry: machinery, psychology, and sociology.

The change that machinery has brought is more than a

new collection of sights and sounds and smells, although these are relevant. It is partly the mechanizing of daily acts—the substitution of button-pushing and switch-throwing for acquired skills. But it is far more the revelation of new worlds of power and movement. It is the hands extended, in making an article, to elaborate machines, the nimble fingers losing their genius to the thousand-times more nimble parts of loom and drill press. It is the eye magnified by intricately cut glass, and the ear amplified by the radio, made more sensitive than that of any forest-living creature.

A poet today, seeking for a way to express a great force, will think as readily of compressed steam in a cylinder as of the tides; of an electrical current rather than the strength of an animal. The fact of a human voice thrown out through the air by a machine and being made audible half the world away by another machine is exciting to the imagination. The purring cat's-head of a dynamo has as great possibilities for becoming as familiarly used in verse as the traditional plow, itself a machine. One of the largest conceptions possible in poetry now is the airplane—man catapulted through space by his own creation.

The machine must not be worshiped as god or devil, nor must it be damned, save when it is misused as in the deadly instruments of war. The poet must accept it as part of his world in the way that the author of *John Brown's Body* has urged:

*Out of John Brown's strong sinews the tall skyscrapers grow,
Out of his heart the chanting buildings rise,
Rivet and girder, motor and dynamo,*

*Pillar of smoke by day and fire by night,
 The steel-faced cities reaching at the skies,
 The whole enormous and rotating cage
 Hung with hard jewels of electric light. . . .
 If you at last must have a word to say,
 Say neither, in their way,
 "It is a deadly magic and accursed,"
 Nor "It is blest," but only, "It is here."*

The necessary thing is to combine the new machinery with the old—plows, spinning wheels, ships, and wagons. The new is an immensely speeded-up addition to these. Poetry has previously drawn most of its images from nature. It must now draw a greater number from machines, as they displace part of nature in our experience. This is not to imply that poetry must be filled with the whir and clatter of a factory, although it should be at times. The autumnal flight of birds and the turn and pound of a driving wheel should both move through the verse of our time.

Equally with the aspects of nature, machines may be merely described or their relation to men indicated. Or they may be converted into symbols and images as MacKnight Black does in "Reciprocating Engine" from his book of poems, *Machinery*:

*The arc of a balance-wheel
 Flows like a curved rush of swallows, come over a hill. . . .
 Things lost come again in sudden new beauty.
 Look long on an engine. It is sweet to the eyes.*

In these from "Smoke and Steel" Sandburg describes the union of the blood of men and the smoke of fires in the making of steel:

*A bar of steel—it is only
Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and the blood of a man.
A runner of fire ran in, ran out, ran somewhere else,
And left—smoke and the blood of a man
And the finished steel, chilled and blue.*

Ultimately the machine must be transformed into a generalized term, as in Auden's looking at something: "As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman." In these lines from Stephen Spender the machine no longer stands outside the inner motivation of the poem, nor is it merely described. It is an integral part of the original mood and the writing.

*More beautiful and soft than any moth
With burring furred antennae feeling its huge path
Through dusk, the air-liner with shut-off engines
Glides over suburbs and the sleeves set trailing tall
To point the wind. Gently, broadly, she falls,
Scarcely disturbing charted currents of air.*

The poem convinces you that it was as natural for Spender to write so sympathetically of an airplane as it was for Keats to write of a Grecian urn, or Shelley of the west wind.

The knowledge that the air around him swarms with words and music on radio waves, with the sun's energy and an infinitude of light-waves bearing the appearances of objects, is as important to a poet as it is fascinating. The roaring

flame of blast furnaces at night may have for him the same burning terror that the sun has by day. The problem of using science and machines in verse has so far been their impersonality, their lack of human association. We were accustomed to windmills but not to dynamos. We were familiar with a horse-drawn plow but not with tractors, and besides there was an ancient tradition for using the plow and the windmill in poetry. But this is changing. It begins with the child. He plays now with miniature airplanes, streamlined trains, and a multitude of mechanical devices. He sees them represented in the funnies. They will not be strange to him when he grows up. He may have his childhood recalled by the sight, not of a certain flower remembered from his mother's garden, but by the sight of a certain airplane with a distinctive wing—if any model will last that long.

It is often complained that machines, being inanimate, can never even partly displace animate nature in poetry. They say that such a nature image as that in the line "But thine eternal summer shall not fade" can never be replaced by an image from science or machinery. There are two replies to this.

In the first place, much of the nature used in poetry is just as non-living as machines; a season's change is weather as well as plants; and Wordsworth's "something far more deeply interfused" was actually fused with rock and sun as well as daffodils. The traditional comparison of a man's old age to the setting sun shows how an inanimate object may, by long association, acquire the aspect of life. And yet surely the running-down and disrepair of an old machine are more definite images of a man's age, and far more contemporary ones. In the second place, as with the example of the sun

above, machines may by constant familiarity acquire that semblance of a life which inanimate objects of nature have long had.

There are many city dwellers today for whom a machine and impersonal environment are far more real and understandable than a nature environment. Nature for them is something kept behind cages in parks or used as an escape from city heat; a place where empty beer cans are thrown on Sunday. The nature tradition of poetry will in time seem for them unreal and irrelevant—as lifeless as machine poetry now seems to many. Their life will have to be expressed in its hard and daily terms, in steel and motor. The clouds are there, over the city, but they are bringers of gutter-streams and coolers of hot apartment-house roofs rather than nourishers of crops and growing things.

There is one further consideration. Machinery may not serve precisely the same purpose in poetry that nature does, and therefore will not be substituted directly for it. Its function may be to reveal a portion of human life which thus far the use of nature has not been able to reveal, in doing which it will not compete with nature but rather complement and complete it. One specific example of this is the difficulty of expressing man's social relationships in verse by means of the traditional forms and images. It may be that the highly complex and perfectly unified parts of machines, the relationship between separate but interacting machines, and the power that operates through all of them will express social terms and the unity and interaction of social life far better than can anything drawn from nature. With that increasing sympathy for society which will come with understanding, there will rise a stronger motivation to write poetry which deals

with specific social and political questions. Anything that affects the lives of men is fit subject for poetry. If the life of this century is going to be one of social unrest and profound efforts to adjust the machine to society, or our social and economic system to a machine age, then poetry will be unavoidably concerned, at least in part, with that unrest.

Modern psychology has altered the position of a poet today less obviously than machinery, and yet as deeply. It has entirely eliminated the inspiration theory of writing by showing that poems derive not from some external source but from such immediate and internal influences as a childhood memory unconsciously retained, last night's supper, a forgotten conversation, and the terrible directness of dreams. It has proved that the condition of mind from which a poet writes is not isolated, separate from his complete person or even a unique and entirely single feeling, but rather the fulfilment of the total person—the end-result of nerve, muscle, emotion, idea—twisted by the imagination into a unified form. However humiliating to the poet, it can be said of some poetry that it comes not from the mind alone but from the glands.

As much understanding of the intricate working of the human mind as possible is necessary to the poet. Until now this has come largely through the qualities of sympathy and intuition. But these can be supplemented today by all that psychology has contributed to opening the dark area of the mind. Not only has it enlarged our comprehension of past literature, as of the characters in Shakespeare, but it has expanded our belief about what should go into future literature. What we know of the sex impulse may not give us a deeper sense of the power of love in human affairs, but it will

surely give us increased understanding in writing about it. Inhibition and repression have been the cause and source of much verse. A true knowledge of them may be able to make them subjects, however indirectly, of verse.

It must not be thought that poems will become case histories. The poet can use the analyses of a psychiatrist without simply versifying them. He will use them to help interpret the actions of men. As with machinery, psychology is something to be added to our customary ways of thinking and of writing. It is not intended to replace them. Its purpose is to increase the capacity of poetry to express the time in which it is written, and the men who live in that time.

Just as science and its creation machinery have advanced knowledge of our material environment, and psychology knowledge of personality, so has sociology increased knowledge of our social environment. We realize now the multitude of forces working on the individual that come not from nature or from within himself but from society. The daily dependence of every man on legions of other men he has never seen, and the existence of a vast social structure, greater than the sum of all its living parts, are important to the poet—as important as the fact of the earth turning in day and night.

As a poet better understands his social being, he will turn with greater interest toward it. Social phenomena and feeling may suffuse his verse as natural phenomena have. It may be that society will become as compelling and dominant for some poet as nature was for Wordsworth; that the energy running through all men and connecting them in one organic whole will charge his mind with as strong an electric current as that sense of a natural power in all things charged

the mind of Wordsworth, producing in each a mood of mingling with a will and a being greater than himself. The difference between the two conditions is that a man can associate himself with nature but not alter it, passively letting his personality respond to its impulses; but a man is able to merge himself with society and yet move actively to change it, in which he has the amazing and human faculty of changing himself.

Certainly poetry will as a whole become more "social-minded." It will react instinctively to social movements as it once did to the moving wind. Poetry has already come out of the tower to talk with men and women on the street, and it can never go back. In these days of universal conscription a poet must be interested in an armament bill in Washington or Westminster and in the foreign policy of his own and all other nations, for they may affect his own life deeply or end it. He must be aware, in a time when so many millions of lives depend on an industrial system's working smoothly, of economic changes and forces which control these millions. A wage rise or fall has as strong and immediate an impact on factory workers as ever rainfall or good and bad crops had on an agricultural people.

One result of this awareness will be the desire to use common speech and contemporary images, and new verse forms and cadences to fit them. MacLeish, in a note to his verse-play *Panic*, has argued that modern dramatic verse must be the opposite of Elizabethan; that today the American voice drops away toward the end of its sentence or its speaking, and so the line of verse must fall away. Elizabethan verse rose toward the end because men spoke with a rising inflection. Hence the strong endings in plays of that time

and the weak endings of MacLeish's verse. I do not agree with this, but it is such a searching for a form to match the speech that we need. In America our verse has tended more and more to match the rhythms of speech. With this tendency, and our enormous facilities for communication by radio, book, and newspaper, verse may come to be written for the medium in which it will appear. As the ballads were written for singing, so may a new kind of verse be written for the radio. The movies should produce a highly rhythmic and onomatopoeic verse to be spoken with music, which was written inseparably for the verse. I have heard a poem of the young English poet W. H. Auden, written especially for the occasion, read during the showing of a film depicting the passage of a night mail train to the north of England. The verse, like the film, followed the progress and speed of the train through village and valley, both in its details and in its sounds. It was very exciting to watch dawn moving over the dark northern hills and to hear it carefully described in strong verse.

This concern with social life has already produced one result—an increase of politics in verse that is almost an invasion. It is not new. Milton was moved to write a sonnet on the late massacre in Piedmont. Shelley, far away in Italy, wrote a long poem condemning the "Peterloo massacre" in 1819, when a huge crowd of people, meeting outside Manchester to protest certain policies of the government, was fired upon by soldiers. Shelley wrote numerous poems directly dealing with the politics of his time and with republicanism in a time when to be a republican was far more dangerous than to be a communist in England now. The

Russian Revolution has moved many poets, especially in France and England, as deeply as the French Revolution moved Wordsworth.

One of the most curious means of enlarging our expression both of contemporary life and of the ancient human instincts has been the utilization of one of the newest sciences, anthropology. What has been discovered about prehistoric and primitive peoples is used to interpret the most civilized of men. T. S. Eliot acknowledges his debt, in writing *The Waste Land*, to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, especially the Adonis and Osiris volumes, and to Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. MacLeish's *Pot of Earth* is filled with the study of fertility legends and rites. Auden has written of the primitivism of music:

*The string's excitement, the applauding drum
Are but the initiating ceremony
That out of cloud the ancestral face may come.*

And of the personality's urge to assure its own nature:

*And all emotions to expression came,
Recovering the archaic imagery;
This longing for assurance takes the form
Of a hawk's vertical swooping at the sky. . . .*

Should the facilities for understanding the nature of personality increase as rapidly in this century as the facilities for understanding the nature of matter increased in the last, we shall have the possibility of putting into verse such a comprehension of the character and motivations of men as has not

been thought of. One result has already been the struggle of the ego to maintain its validity in face of the annihilating knowledge both of it and of society and of the world of energy and matter which this century has revealed. Poetry was for a while in the twenties a chant of the unimportance of the self. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is a type of utter self-flagellation in verse—an assertion that the individual, in spite of his preoccupation with his own mind, is meaningless before the huge complexities of modern life. Here is the complete statement of man as petty, valueless, and doomed:

*No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be,
Am an attendant Lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the Prince, no doubt an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use. . . .*

I do not wish to repudiate all poetry which comes from the self and is entirely about it. Surely poets will use their new knowledge and understanding to interpret not only other men and social groups but themselves. They may be led to an examination of their minds so deep that it is terrifying. But those with courage will use their new material and not be used by it, although it involves stretching their minds out on a board like a pinned moth. John Lehmann wrote of this:

*To penetrate that room is my desire,
The extreme attic of the mind that lies
Just beyond the last bend in the corridor.*

Some poets have tried to solve the problem of the self by going beyond it in historical or social poetry, where the self is concealed in objective action or in a political movement. The individual is merged in something so much bigger than himself that he disappears, losing his identity, save in so far as the whole external action may be an image of his mind. These poets seek a way in which the immense awareness of our time can be asserted on a broader scale than one man. Men may say of the self what Stephen Spender said:

*What I had not foreseen
Was the gradual day
Weakening the will
Leaking the brightness away. . . .*

But others will say that there is a vaster will than the self's own which works through that gradual day, and a brightness which burns when the small flame goes out.

This finding of the individual inadequate, and his private feelings insufficient for all the poetry a man writes, does not mean that the individuality of men will be destroyed. It may, on the contrary, be the salvation of the individual today. If a man stands out in solitary aloofness from his time he may drown in it. But in losing his lone self he may find it in a more powerful and daring state of being. Some find it in the necessity of faith, some in the exhilarating purge of action, and some in a belief demanding action. C. Day Lewis has praised this man who has solved his private fate by mingling with a public one:

*For those who had the power,
Unhesitating whether to kill or cure:*

*Those who were not afraid
To dam the estuary or start the forest fire:
Whose hearts were filled
With enthusiasm as with a constant wind . . .
There need be no obituary nor wreath,
Accomplices of death . . .
Their spirit shall be blowing out of the sunrise,
Their veins our rivers, their bones our bread.*

That spirit blowing out of the sunrise is the moving force toward which men, whose way of talking is that high and tense speech called "poetry," will more and more turn their waiting faces.

AMERICA'S MEDIEVAL WOMEN¹

PEARL S. BUCK (1892—

From *Harper's Magazine*, 1938.

From her vantage-point of objectivity Mrs. Buck states with candor what she observes of American women and brings, as she so often does, a social problem into sharp relief. To call women medieval in this ultra-modern era takes courage.

I am an American woman but I had no opportunity until a few years ago to know women in America. Living as I did in China, it is true that I saw a few American women; but that is not the same thing. One was still not able to draw many conclusions from them about American women. I gathered, however, that they felt that girls in China had a hard time of it, because there every family liked sons better than daughters, and, in the average family, did not give them the same education or treatment. In America, however, they said people welcomed sons and daughters equally and treated them the same. This, after years in a country which defines a woman's limitations very clearly, seemed nothing short of heaven—if true.

When I came to America to live therefore I was interested particularly in her women. And during these immediate past years I have come to know a good many of them—women in business, artists, housewives in city and country,

¹ Copyright, 1938 by Pearl S. Buck. Reprinted by permission of the author's agent David Lloyd. New York, N. Y.

women young and old. I have taken pains to know them. More than that, I have made my own place as a woman in America. And I find that what I anticipated before I came here is quite wrong. It seems to me that women are very badly treated in America. A few of them know it, more of them dimly suspect it, and most of them, though they know they ought to be glad they live in a Christian country where women are given an education, do not feel as happy in their lonely hearts as they wish they did. The reason for this unhappiness is a secret sense of failure, and this sense of failure comes from a feeling of inferiority, and the feeling of inferiority comes from a realization that actually women are not much respected in America.

I know quite well that any American man hearing this will laugh his usual tolerant laughter, though tolerant laughter is the cruelest form of contempt. He always laughs tolerantly when the subject of women is broached, for that is the attitude in which he has been bred. And immaturely, he judges the whole world of women by the only woman he knows at all—his wife. Nor does he want the sort of wife at whom he cannot laugh tolerantly. I was once amazed to see a certain American man, intelligent, learned, and cultivated, prepare to marry for his second wife a woman as silly and unfit for him as the first one had been, whom he had just divorced. I had to exclaim before it was too late, "Why do you do the same thing over again? She's merely younger and prettier than the other one—that's all. And even those differences are only temporary." To which he growled, "I do not want a damned intelligent woman in the house when I come home at night. I want my mind to rest."

What he did not see of course—though he found it out

later—was that there could be no rest for him of any kind. He was irritated by a thousand stupidities and follies and beaten in the end by his own cowardice. He died a score of years too soon, exhausted not by work but by nervous worry. His two wives go hardily on, headed for a hundred, since he left them what is called “well provided for.” Neither of them has ever done an honest day’s work in her life, and he literally sacrificed his valuable life to keep them alive.

And yet, going home that day from his funeral and wondering how it could have been helped, I knew it could not have been helped. He was doomed to the unhappiness, or at least to the mediocre happiness, with which many if not most American men must be satisfied in their relationships with their women. For if he had been married to an intelligent superior woman he would have been yet more unhappy, since, with all his brilliance as a scientist, he belonged to that vast majority of American men who still repeat to-day the cry of traditional male pride, “I don’t want *my* wife to work.”

That is, he wanted a woman who would contain herself docilely within four walls. And he could not have seen that an intelligent, energetic, educated woman cannot be kept in four walls—even satin-lined, diamond-studded walls—without discovering sooner or later that they are still a prison cell. No home offers scope enough to-day for the trained energies of an intelligent modern woman. Even children are not enough. She may want them, need them and have them, love them and enjoy them, but they are not enough for her, even during the short time they preoccupy her. Nor is her husband, however dear and congenial, enough for her. He may supply all her needs for human companionship, but there is

still more to life than that. There is the individual life. She must feel herself growing and becoming more and more complete as an individual, as well as a wife and mother, before she can even be a good wife and mother. I heard a smug little gray-haired woman say last week, "No, I don't know anything about politics. It takes all my time to be a good wife and mother. I haven't time to keep up with other things." Unfortunately her husband, successful doctor that he is, has time to keep up not only with his business and with being what she calls a "wonderful husband and father," but with another woman as well. But that too is one of the things she knows nothing about. . . . Yet who can blame him? He is clever and full of interest in many things, and his wife is dulled with years of living in the four walls he put round her. It is a little unfair that he so encouraged her to stay in the walls that she came to believe in them completely as her place.

But tradition is very strong in this backward country of ours. We Americans are a backward nation in everything except in the making and using of machines. And we are nowhere more backward than we are in our attitude toward our women. We still, morally, shut the door of her home on a woman. We say to her, "Your home ought to be enough for you if you are a nice woman. Your husband ought to be enough—and your children." If she says, "But they aren't enough—what shall I do?", we say, "Go and have a good time, that's a nice girl. Get yourself a new hat or something, or go to the *matinée* or join a bridge club. Don't worry your pretty head about what is not your business."

If she persists in being interested in things beyond her home we insist that she must be neglecting her home. If she

still persists and makes a success through incredible dogged persistence we laugh at her. We even sneer at her and sometimes we treat her with unbelievable rudeness. I do not know the Secretary of Labor in our government, but I have seen her. She looks a quiet, serious, unassuming woman. I have taken pains to inquire of people who know, and it seems her home is not neglected. She has done at least as good a job in Washington as a number of men there in leading positions. But the slurs that have been cast upon her, the rudenesses of private and public talk, the injustices that have been done her merely because she is a woman in a place heretofore occupied by a man, have been amazing to a person unaccustomed to the American attitude toward women. It seems nothing short of barbarous.

And yet, vicious circle that it is, I cannot blame Americans for distrusting the ability of their women. For if the intelligent woman obeys the voice of tradition and limits herself to the traditional four walls she joins the vast ranks of the nervous, restless, average American women whose whimsies torture their families, who spoil the good name of all women because they are often flighty, unreliable, without good judgment in affairs, and given to self-pity. In short, she becomes a neurotic, if not all the time, a good deal of the time. Without knowing it or meaning it she falls too often to being a petty dictator in the home, a nag to her husband and children, and a gossip among her women friends. Too often too she takes no interest in any matters of social importance and refuses all responsibility in the community which she can avoid. She may be either a gadabout and extravagant or she may turn into a recluse and pride herself on being a "home woman." Neither of these escapes

deceives the discerning. When will American men learn that they cannot expect happiness with a wife who is not her whole self? A restless unfulfilled woman is not going to be a satisfied wife or satisfactory lover. It is not that "women are like that." Anyone would be "like that" if he were put into such circumstances—that is, trained and developed for opportunity later denied.

"Plenty of men like that too nowadays," someone may murmur.

Yes, but the times have done it, and not tradition. There is a difference. And one man has as good a chance as another to win or lose, even in hard times. But no woman has a man's chance in hard times, or in any times.

II

I am not so naïve, however, as to believe that one sex is responsible for this unfortunate plight of the American woman. I am not a feminist, but I am an individualist. I do not believe there is any important difference between men and women—certainly not as much as there may be between one woman and another or one man and another. There are plenty of women—and men, for that matter—who would be completely fulfilled in being allowed to be as lazy as possible. If some one will ensconce them in a pleasant home and pay their bills they ask no more of life. It is quite all right for these men and women to live thus so long as fools can be found who will pay so much for nothing much in return. Gigolos, male and female, are to be found in every class and in the best of homes. But when a man does not want to be a gigolo he has the freedom to go out and work and create

as well as he can. But a woman has not. Even if her individual husband lets her, tradition in society is against her.

For another thing we Americans cannot seem to believe or understand is that women—some women, any woman, or as I believe, most women—are able to be good wives, ardent lovers, excellent mothers, and yet be themselves too. This seems strange, for as a nation we have fitted woman to be an individual as well as a woman by giving her a physical and mental education and a training superior to that of women in any other nation. But when she comes eagerly to life, ready to contribute her share, not only to home, but to government, sciences, and arts, we raise the old sickening cry of tradition, "This isn't your business! Woman's place is in the home—" and we shut the door in her face.

I am aware that at this point American men will be swearing and shouting, "You don't know what you're talking about! Why, we give our women more than any women on earth have!" With that I perfectly agree. American women are the most privileged in the world. They have all the privileges—far too many. They have so many privileges that a good many of them are utterly spoiled. They have privileges but they have no equality. "Nobody keeps them back," the American man declares. Ah, nobody, but everybody! For they are kept back by tradition expressed through the prejudices not only of men but of stupid, unthinking, tradition-bound women. Here is what I heard a few days ago.

A young woman wanted a new book to read and her father offered to send it to her. "What do you want?" he asked.

"Anything, only not one by a woman," she said carelessly. "I have a prejudice against books written by women."

Ignoring the rudeness, I asked, "Why?"

"Oh, I dislike women," she said. What she really meant was she despised women so much that she actually disliked women who did anything beyond the traditional jobs that the average women do. There are thousands of women who uphold medieval tradition in America more heartily than do men—just as in China it is the ignorant tradition-bound women who have clung to foot binding for themselves and their daughters. . . . No, women have many enemies among women. It goes back of course to the old jealous sense of general female inferiority. Tradition, if it binds one, should bind all, they feel.

Sometimes, I confess, I do not see how American men can endure some of their women—their imperiousness, their peevishness, their headstrongness, their utter selfishness, their smallness of mind and outlook, their lack of any sense of responsibility toward society, even to be pleasant. And their laziness—look at the motion-picture houses, the theaters, the lecture halls—crowded all day with women! The average house, even with no servant, can be no full-time job or they wouldn't be there in such hordes—they couldn't be there. But children go to school as soon as they stop being babies, and electricity cleans and washes the house and clothing, and husbands are away all day. So what is there for the restless woman to do? She goes to the show—and comes home, if she has any sense, to wonder what life is for, and to think that marriage isn't so much after all, though if she hadn't been married she would have been ashamed of herself. For

tradition is there too, and it would *have* made her seem, if unmarried, unsuccessful as a female.

"But what are we going to do?" the harassed American man cries. "There aren't enough *jobs* now to go round. And women are getting into industries more and more."

This is nonsense and a *masculine* bugaboo, though merely getting a job is not *what* I mean. The truth is the number of women in industries is increasing at so slow a rate that it is shocking when one considers how long they have had an equal chance with *men* for education and training. In the past fifty years—that is, half a century, during which education for women *has* enormously increased—the percentage of women in *industry* and the professions has increased from fourteen per cent only to twenty-two per cent. That means millions of women have been made ready for work they *either had* no chance to do or never wanted to do.

As to what *men* are going to do with women, I do not pretend to know. ^{But} I know I have never seen in any country—and I have seen most of the countries of the world—such unsatisfactory personal relationships between men and women as are in America—no, not even in Japan, where women as a class are depressed. For the Japanese are wiser in their treatment of women than we Americans are. They keep them down from the beginning so that they never hope for or expect more than life is to give them. They are not restless or neurotic or despotic, nor are they spoiled children. They have not been trained for equality and they do not expect it. They know they are upper servants, and they fulfil their duties gracefully and ably, and are happier on the whole than women in America. To know what one can

have and to do with it, being prepared for no more, is the basis of equilibrium.

III

No, what is wrong in America is this matter of educating women. Life for the American woman is still controlled by old traditions. Men think of women, if at all, in the old simple traditional ways. Then women ought to be prepared for this sort of life and shaped through childhood and girlhood for what is to come. The root of the discontent in American women is that they are too well educated. What is the use of it? They do not need college educations nor even high school educations. What they ought to have is a simple course in reading, writing, and arithmetic—and advanced courses in cosmetics, bridge, sports, how to conduct a club meeting gracefully, how to be an attractive hostess, with or without servants, and how to deal with very young children in the home. This last of course, obviously, should be purely optional.

But all this higher present education is unfortunate. It has led American women into having ideas which they can never realize when they come to maturity. A college education may, for instance, persuade a girl to become interested in biology, which may lead her into wanting to become a doctor. And yet she will never have the chance to become a first-rate doctor, however gifted she is by birth. People will not allow it—not only men, but women will not allow it. They will look at her tentative little shingle and shrug their shoulders and say, "I don't feel I'd *trust* a woman doctor as I would a man." So after a while, since she has to earn something, she takes her shingle down and accepts a secondary

position in a hospital or a school or goes into baby-clinic work, supplemented by magazine articles on child care—or she just marries a doctor. But inside herself she knows she still wants to *be* a doctor, only she cannot. Tradition does not allow it.

Or a college education may lead a girl into wanting to be a banker. It is natural for women to be interested in finance since they own about seventy per cent of America's money. But it is unfortunate if a woman thinks she can be a real banker. I have talked with a good many women who work in our American banking system. Not one is where she hoped to be when she began, and a fair percentage are not where they should be with their high executive ability, or where they would be if they were men. As one of the most brilliant of them said to me bitterly, "I know if I were a man I should now, at the age of fifty, and after thirty years of experience, be a bank president. But I'll never be anything but an assistant to a vice-president. I reached the top—for a woman—years ago. I'll never be allowed to go on."

"Why can't you?" I inquired, being then too innocent.

"They say no one would want to put money in a bank run by a woman," she said.

I pondered this. I had then just come from Shanghai, where one of the best modern banks was run and controlled entirely by modern Chinese women. It was a prosperous bank because most people there thought women were probably more honest than men and more practical in the handling of money. So the Chinese women bankers did very well.

A good deal is said too about the profession of teaching

for women. There are a great many women teachers in America—many more in proportion to men than in other countries. Men here, it seems, allow women to teach in lower schools because they themselves do not want to teach in anything less than a college. And even the best men do not like to teach in women's colleges nor in co-educational colleges. The finest teaching in America, I am told, is done by men for men.

As for the arts, I know very well that the odds are strongly against the woman. Granted an equally good product, the man is given the favor always. Women artists in any field are not often taken seriously, however serious their work. It is true that they often achieve high popular success. But this counts against them as artists. American men critics may show respect to a foreign woman artist, feeling that perhaps the foreign women are better than their own. But they cannot believe that the fools they see in department stores, in the subways and ^{new} or running to the movies and lectures, or even in ^{new} homes, can amount to anything in the arts. ^{new} they cannot think of a woman at all, but only of "women." And the pathetic efforts of American women to improve their minds by reading and clubs have only heightened the ridicule and contempt in which their men hold them. To educate women, therefore, to think, so that they need the personal fulfillment of activity and participation in all parts of life is acute cruelty, for they are not allowed this fulfillment. They should be educated not to think beyond the demands of simple household affairs or beyond the small arts and graces of pleasing men who seem always to want mental rest. The present method is not only cruel; it is extremely wasteful. Good money is spent

teaching women to do things for which there will be no need. Men strain themselves to furnish educations for their daughters which they would be happier without, and not only happier but better women because they would be more contented women.

It is not only wasteful but dangerous. To educate women as we do for our present state of traditionalism is to put new wine into old bottles. A good deal of ferment is going on. And if we keep this up more will come of it. No one knows the effect upon children, for instance, of so many discontented women as mothers. Amiable, ignorant, bovine women make much better mothers than neurotic college graduates. And a woman does not need to complain aloud to let her children know she is unhappy. The atmosphere about her is gray with her secret discontent and children live deprived of that essential gayety in which they thrive as in sunshine. So few American women are really gay. This must have an effect.

IV

So, though I am impressed with the fact that American women do not, as a group, seem happy, privileged as they are, I am not surprised. I know that happiness comes to an individual only as a result of personal fulfillment through complete functioning of all the energies and capabilities with which one is born. I do not for a moment mean that all women must go out and find jobs and "do something" outside the home. That would be as silly and general a mistake as our present general clinging to tradition. I simply mean let us be realistic. Let us face the fact that as a nation we are in a medieval state of mind about the place of women in

society. Let each man ask himself—he need not answer aloud—where he really wants his woman. The majority, if they are honest, must acknowledge that they would like contented adoring women who want no more than their homes. I do not quarrel with that. What is, is. All I say is, let us realize facts. Tradition rules the relation of the sexes in America. Women are not welcome outside the home except in subsidiary positions, doing, on the whole, things men do not want to do. The great injustice to women is in not recognizing this frankly and in not preparing them for it.

Of course there is the chimeralike possibility that we might change tradition. But I do not see anyone capable of changing it. Men certainly will not. They do not even want to talk about it. They do not want the woman question stirred up, having as they say, “enough on their hands already.” To them, of course, women “stirred up” simply means nervous, illogical, clamoring children who must be placated in one way or another. They cannot conceive of woman as a rational being, equal to themselves and not always fundamentally connected with sex. Emotionally, as it has been truly said, many American men are adolescents—kind, delightful, charming adolescents. “He’s just like a boy” seems to be considered a complement to a man in America. It ought to be an insult. The horrible boyishness lingering in persons who should be adult is as dismaying as mental retardation. It is responsible for our childish tendencies to “jazz things up,” to make “whoopie,” to think of being drunk, of removing “inhibitions,” of playing the clown, as the only way to have a good time, to the complete destruc-

tion of adult conversation and real wit and subtler humor. It certainly is responsible for wanting women to be nothing but wives, mothers, or leggy relaxations for tired business men. Even a pretty college girl said desparingly not long ago in my presence, "You can't get anywhere with men if you show any brains. I have to make myself a nit-wit if I want dates. Oh, well, that's the way they are!" There are too many nice and rather sad American women who patiently accept even their middle-aged and old men as perennial "boys." "Men are like that," they say, at least as often as men say, "women are like that."

Nothing could show a greater misunderstanding between the sexes than this frequent fatalistic remark. Neither men nor women are like that if "that" means what they now seem to each other. It is a strange fact that in new America, as in old India or China, the real life of each sex is not with each other but away from each other. Men and women in America meet stiffly for social functions, drink together in an earnest effort to feel less inhibited, play the fool guardedly and feel queer about it afterward. Or they meet for physical sex, in the home or out. And they jog along in family life. Of the delight of exploring each other's differing but equally important personalities and points of view, of the pleasure of real mutual comprehension and appreciation and companionship, there is almost none, inside the home or out. Tradition decrees that after marriage real companionship between persons of opposite sex must cease except between husband and wife. Tradition decrees that all companionship indeed between men and women is tinged with sex. Such an idea as interest in each other as persons, aside from

sex, is almost unknown. Women, talking of this among themselves, say, "Men don't want anything else." I am inclined to think they are right. The average American man demands amazingly little from his women—nothing much except to look as pretty as possible on as little money as possible, to run the home economically with as little trouble as possible to the man when he comes home tired. What educated, intelligent, clever, gifted woman is going to be satisfied with that? What average woman would be satisfied even? Ask the average man if he would change places with a woman—any woman. The idea horrifies him. Yet women are far more like him than he knows or wants to know, and modern times have done everything to make her more so.

No, our men, perennial boys, most of them, will not do anything about changing tradition. They do not know how, absorbed as they are in the game of business, abashed as they are in the presence of sex as anything except simply physical, and afraid as they are of women. They are, naturally, afraid of women or they would not cling so to tradition. They were afraid of their mothers when they were children, their imperious, discontented mothers, and that fear carries over into fear of their wives and fear of all women, in industry as well as at home. It leads to the attitude of petty deception which so many perennially boyish men maintain toward their women.

So, naturally enough, men do not want women "getting too smart." I heard a carpenter working in my home say pontifically to his assistant about to be married, "And why would you want a woman educated? Says I, if I want education I can go to the public library. A woman should

know just so much as when it rains she stands on the sheltered side of the street. It's enough." And after a moment he added solemnly, "You don't want a woman what can talk smart. You want one what can keep quiet smart."

The voice of America's perennial boys, I thought—speaking out in a carpenter, but heard as clearly in the embarrassed reserves of an after-dinner circle in a drawing-room. And yet, I do not blame them. There are so many women who chatter without thought, who stop all attempts at conversation with continual commonplaces uttered with all the petty authority of ignorance. And the fetters of another tradition—that of chivalry—still hang upon American men. Foolish, haughty women, standing in crowded buses, staring at a tired man in a seat, accepting favors as their right; peevish, idle women, wasting their husbands' money; dogmatic women talking ignorantly about practical important matters—men must try to be polite to them all alike. I do not blame American men, except for not seeing that not all women are the same.

We are so clever with machines, we Americans. But we have done a silly thing with our women. We have put modern high-powered engines into old antiquated vehicles. It is no wonder the thing is not working. And there are only two courses to follow if we do want it to work. We must go back to the old simple one-horse-power engine or else we must change the body to suit the engine—one or the other. If the first, then tradition must be held to from the moment a woman is born, not, as it now is, clamped upon her when, after a free and extraordinarily equal childhood and girlhood with boys, she attempts to enter into a

free and equal adult life with men and finds it denied her, to discover then that her education has had nothing to do with her life.

Or else we must be willing to let her go on as she began. This means that American men must cease being "sweet boys" and grow up emotionally as well as physically and face women as adult men. But they, poor things, have not been fitted for that either! Besides of course they are afraid of what women might do. And women, inexperienced and eager, will probably do as many foolish things as men have until they have had as much practice.

Of one thing I am sure, however. There will be no real content among American women unless they are made and kept more ignorant or unless they are given equal opportunity with men to use what they have been taught. And American men will not be really happy until their women are.

CREATING AND SHARING VALUES¹

LEWIS MUMFORD (1895—

From *Faith For Living*, 1940.

One gathers from the philosophy of Lewis Mumford a note of optimism as to the future of civilization. Danger lurks, nevertheless, in the subversion of spiritual values, and a problem looms in the method of making available to all men a more abundant life.

Man's chief purpose is the creation and preservation of values: that is what gives meaning to our civilization, and the participation in this is what gives significance, ultimately, to the individual human life.

Only in so far as values are fostered—through art and religion and science and love and domestic life—can men effectively use the machines and powers that have enabled them to tame nature and secure human existence from the worst outrages and accidents that forever threaten it. Civilization, our very capacity to be human, rests on that perpetual effort. If any nation or group thinks that the job is finished, or if man puts his confidence solely in the instruments and forgets the ends and ideals and metaphysical purposes—then the structure crumbles away: then man himself is finished.

Thought, social relations, economic practices, biological

¹ Reprinted from *Faith For Living* by Lewis Mumford, copyright by Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940. Used with the permission of the publishers.

activities, cosmic backgrounds—all these are organically united and call for co-operations that reach out beyond the borders of any single community, even as they reach out beyond our limited present, into the past and future. That which exists by itself has, indeed, no real existence at all; it is a phantasm, an aberration of the mind. The finer life becomes, the more complicated becomes the network of relationships, and the more invisible filaments bind part with part.

Goethe once put this truth admirably in a conversation with Eckermann. "People," he said, "are always talking about originality; but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and keeps on to the end. What can we call ours except energy, strength, will? If I could give an account of what I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small remainder." That does not merely hold for Goethe; it holds for every human group, every community, every person.

The individual who fancies he has made his own professional career, or the inventor who believes he has the sole right to his invention, or the business man who thinks his own unaided efforts have brought him his fortune is merely ignorant of his debts. Like Bounderby, whom Dickens portrayed in "Hard Times," he is a monster of ingratitude. Darwin formulated his "Origin of Species" with the sense that he was making a completely unique personal discovery. Before he was finished the similar hypothesis of another young naturalist, Wallace, was brought to his attention: it turned out that they had both got their clue from Malthus's "Essay on Population." By the time Darwin published his second edition, he had at last become aware of a whole line

of predecessors and partial anticipators, extending back to the Greeks.

The individual contribution, the work of any single generation, is infinitesimal: the power and glory belong to human society at large, and are the long result of selection, conservation, sacrifice, creation, and renewal—the outcome of endless brave efforts to conserve values and ideas, and to hand them on to posterity, along with physical life itself. Each person is a temporary focus of forces, vitalities, and values that carry back into an immemorial past and that reach forward into an unthinkable future. The best consolation for the dying is the thought that others, equally good, will carry on their work: that is the comfort the father and mother derive from their children, that the teacher derives from his student, that comrades and colleagues pass on to each other. Men are individually nothing except in relation to that greater reality, Man. And Man himself is nought except in relation to that greater reality which he calls divine. Thought, art, love are all intimations of this divinity: flickerings of man-made filaments that connect, in our imaginations, with distant flashes in the dark impenetrable sky.

This, then, is the philosophic justification for every form of social justice: not merely for a sharing of material goods and animal satisfactions, sufficient to sustain life on its humblest levels—though this is important—but also for that degree of cultivation and leisure which makes possible a fuller sharing of all the higher goods of life.

In America we have an historic tradition that recognizes both needs. The Land Grant act that was passed during the Civil War was an attempt to give to every able and willing family that would stake out a homestead a generous share

in the land of our Republic. In another period of crisis, the distribution of work by the W.P.A. was a recognition of the same principle. Embedded still deeper in our traditions is the free elementary school education, now extending even through high school and college, which we have taken to be the inalienable right of every member of the community; as a very means of ensuring his fitness to be an intelligent and responsible member of that community.

Within very definite limits, differentiation of talent must be recognized and differentiation of reward may be serviceable; but never to such an extent as to continue the gross inequalities, the grotesque specialisms, the unpardonable parasitisms that have grown up in the United States—as in the whole Western World—during the past century.

Differentiated tasks, individual preferences, special incentives, intense interests, must all be taken into account in allowing for the full growth of the human personality. But this can happen with justice only after the continuity and security of the person and the community itself are secured. Every attempt to depart from the rule of justice, and to put first, not that which all men must have, but that which a few are able to seize, must defeat the permanent interests of human society. When justice is flouted, in order to give precedence to large holders of capital or landed property, to create a fixed caste with special privileges, or to preserve property itself without respect for its social functions and its duties to the whole community, the result is an evil one. It often ends in the very downfall of the protected caste, through inanition, failure of nerve, sheer laziness.

The first move in the direction of justice is to remove, by example, the false scheme of values that has so long pre-

vailed in Western society. Bread and circuses are no substitute for justice: they lower both the giver and the receiver. Profits and power and special privilege cannot remain as the main motive force of a society that seeks to preserve democratic values and personal liberties: for it is ultimately the one-sided concern with these values that has vitiated and corrupted and now desperately endangered our whole civilization.

The fundamental values of a true community are elsewhere: in love, poetry, disinterested thought, the free use of the imagination, the pursuit of non-utilitarian activities, the production of non-profitmaking goods, the enjoyment of non-consumable wealth—here are the sustaining values of a living culture. To be alive is to hear, to see, to feel, to touch, to shape, to manipulate, to think, and create: then to intensify all these experiences through an organized system of recording and preserving and reproducing them, through the church and the art museum and the concert hall and the laboratory and the school. This is the head-water and reservoir of social life: the Grand Coulee Dam of our whole culture which will finally create a lake from which energy and life will flow into even the most arid spots of human existence.

A community whose life is not irrigated by art and science, by religion and philosophy, day upon day, is a community that exists half alive. A personality who has not entered into this realm has not yet reached the human estate. The very means and instruments of daily routine, our houses and our clothes, our motor cars and our factories, are conditioned by the existence of these other needs that spring out of the needs of the personality: otherwise those

who use them are barbarians—or robots—or at best children playing vacantly with toys. By the same token, these physical structures are stripped of their *proper* significance *as means* when they are condemned to serve as substitutes for life itself. The finest phonograph in the world is no substitute for the hum of a happy mother bending over her child. The most satiny Hollywood boudoir never can make up for the lack of a passionate lover. The most expensive costume will not, when the body must come into play, atone for its limp irresponsiveness; just as the most luxurious student dormitories will never serve the cause of education as well as the presence of intelligent and courageous professors. Life must not wait on physical paraphernalia. Life must come first. "The pretty country folk who lie between the acres of the rye, with a heigh, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no" may well laugh at the Hollywood boudoir.

Our economic activities, during the era that boasted so loudly of industrial progress, failed to achieve their full potentialities for life. This was in no small part because the goods that the machine could produce so plentifully were not justly shared. Hence poverty, secondary starvation, crime, theft, sordid and battered environments, occupied by depressed and battered people: the industrial environment of the larger part of Western civilization.

Our society was divided against itself. It sought progress and it found itself faced with a dead end: economic crises and wars. It boasted of wealth, and its vast mass of tenant farmers, unemployed workers and underfed children proclaimed its poverty. So we had dearth in the midst of plenty, war in the midst of peace, riches atop of squalor,

and, finally, a growing wave of irrationality and superstition and man-worship in a period when exact scientific research had even entered industry.

Human culture, plainly, cannot be sustained unless values enter into every activity. Otherwise we are cursed with a Sunday morality, in which decency and brotherhood and justice are flouted for six days and then piously reinstated on the seventh: a system under which our deeds never by any accident coincide with our professions.

The Athenians were right in believing that the ultimate goods of life could be enjoyed only by free men; they meant by this that they can not be fully enjoyed if they are offered to people who are forced to spend their days in some spiritually deadening or physically exhausting task, whether in the market, the mine, or the workshop. Human development requires both periods of activity and periods of leisure, in which the results of this activity may be meditated upon, absorbed, digested. One of the reasons that country folk, with limited experience, are nevertheless so much better companions for an artist or a thinker than city people of the same class, is that the former have always kept for themselves a little free time to sit still and brood, whittling wood around a winter fire, or bent impassively over a fishing pole, watching the trout's canny flirtations. The city worker may be better read; but the countryman is more reflective: such experience as he has encountered he has salted down.

But it is equally true—and the intellectual tends always to forget this—that spiritual life suffers by complete divorce from the vivid experiences and the salutary restraints of practical activity. The Athenians, fortunately, before they

became engrossed in imperialist ambitions, managed to retain in some measure their hold upon the fundamental manual and operative realities of sport and war. They had tough muscles and well-tempered bodies and eyes quick to note how the grapes were ripening or how the potter molded his clay on the wheel. That sense distinguished Plato from every philosopher down to Descartes. So it is possibly no accident that the most original mind among the Athenians was a stone-cutter by trade and the son of a midwife, or that perhaps the greatest tragic dramatist was also a general. Nor was it an accident, in our own American Golden Day, that Henry Thoreau was a pencil maker and a surveyor, that Herman Melville was a sailor, that Walt Whitman was a carpenter and a printer good enough to set up his own "Leaves of Grass"; or that Abe Lincoln was a rail-splitter who retained to the end of his life a solid confidence in himself that was based on his sure axmanship and shoulders that could carry a heavier burden than his neighbor's.

The segregation of the spiritual life from the practical life is a curse that falls impartially upon both sides of our existence. A society that gives to one class all the opportunities for leisure, and to another all the burdens of work, dooms both classes to spiritual sterility. The first will make busy work for itself: games, fox hunts, parties, organized inanities; while the other will make work itself empty, and even go the forces that make it empty one better, by reducing work to "as little as you can get away with"—only to lose self-respect as well as craftsmanlike pleasure in that very act. One of the main tasks of a purposive intelligence is to keep the inner world and the outer, the spiritual and the

practical, the personal and the mechanical or automatic, in constant interaction. They form a dynamic unity.

The moral to be drawn from this is that servile labor—even if it produces social necessities—should be minimized to the utmost. The problem is not entirely solved by the invention of automatic machines; because, if pushed too far, the routine of mechanized production robs those engaged in it, and even more those displaced by it, of the opportunities for educative, person-satisfying activities. Such work as remains servile or dangerous in our society—whether on the assembly line or on the battlefield—should be shared by the entire adult community.

In short, justice demands either equality of life-sustenance and leisure, in times of plenty and peace, or equality of sacrifice in times of hardship and war. The principle is the same in both cases; and if we introduce the element of sacrifice into our economic system now, where it will affect principally the middle classes and those above them, we may as a country have some guarantee for fruitful and refined leisure—for the good life itself—when at long last we emerge from this murky period.

EDITORIAL¹

E. B. WHITE (1899—

From *The New Yorker Magazine*, June 1, 1946.

From Mr. White's versatile pen comes this provocative editorial essay, —a comment on a current event which goes to the heart of international relationships and human destiny. Here indeed is food for thought!

The Egyptian delegate, retiring from his presidency of the Council, stepped down in a burst of candor. Doctor Afifi Pasha said he was depressed and humanity was disappointed. It seemed to him nations were acting each to further its own interests, not to further the cause of people generally.

That is precisely the case. To change it around is precisely the task. How set nations to work furthering the universal (rather than the special) cause? What treatment is there for the disease of nationalism, a more troublesome disease at this point than cancer? The treatment is known, but not admired. There is a specific for nationalism. We use it every day in our own localities. The specific is government—that is, law; that is, codification of people's moral desires, together with enforcement of the law for common weal.

¹ This editorial was first published in *The New Yorker Magazine* on June 1, 1946, and is reprinted from *The Wild Flag*, by E. B. White (Houghton Mifflin Co.), copyright by E. B. White, 1946. Used with the kind permission of Mr. White.

The specific comes in a bottle and is very expensive. The price is terrific—like radium, only worse. The price is one ounce of pure sovereignty. Too expensive, say the elders of the tribe.

Read the papers and see what the people want. Security. Human rights. Freedom of the press. Peace. Control of atomic energy. Read the papers and see how the statesmen propose to get these plums. Through national power. Through balance of same. Through international accord. Through pacts and agreements (there is the five-year treaty with no frosting, the ten-year treaty with jelly filling, and the twenty-five-year treaty with a prize hidden in the batter). Through commissions. Through Operation Crossroads—to determine which is the more durable, a battleship or a tropical fish. Through foreign policy. Through secret diplomacy (which is merely a redundant phrase for diplomacy). Through the creaky, treacherous machinery of international relations against the same broad, chaotic backdrop of pride, fear, absolute sovereignty, power, and the colorful banners we saluted in assembly hall as pupils in grammar school.

Doctor Afifi is right; the people are not satisfied. During the first post-bellum year, nations have approached the future each to gain its own end. A fair question is this: Can nations now act in any other than a selfish way, even if they want to, given the political equipment which they have provided for themselves? We doubt it. A wrong turn was made somewhere, as far back as the Atlantic Charter—that beloved document which expresses people's desires and their noble aims. The Charter could have shaken the world, but it failed to. It almost made the grade and not quite. It spe-

cifically stated the freedoms we grope toward, specifically denied us the means of achieving them. It reserved for each nation full and unlimited sovereignty—and in so doing wrote itself into history's wastebasket. Again, at Dumbarton Oaks, the right turn was avoided, discreetly, and with many words of cheer, of good will.

But the earth, scratching its statesmen as though they were fleas, heaves and rocks with big new things. This is one of those times. The people feel the disturbance. They know it's here, they fear its consequences, and they live in fear. Living in fear, they act with suspicion, with tension. If anyone were to run out into the Square and shout, 'Go east!', like the characters in the Thurber story, there is a good chance you would see an eastward movement in the panicky noontime; Orson Welles managed it in a mere radio dramatization, way back in the days before the atom was fairly split.

World government is an appalling prospect. Many people have not comprehended it (or distinguished it from world organization). Many others, who have comprehended it, find it preposterous or unattainable in a turbulent and illiterate world where nations and economies conflict daily in many ways. Certainly the world is not ready for government on a planetary scale. In our opinion, it will never be ready. The test is whether the people will chance it anyway—like children who hear the familiar cry, 'Coming, whether ready or not!' At a Federalist convention the other day, Dean Katz of the University of Chicago said, 'Constitutions have never awaited the achievement of trust and a matured sense of community; they have been born of conflicts between groups which have found a basis for union

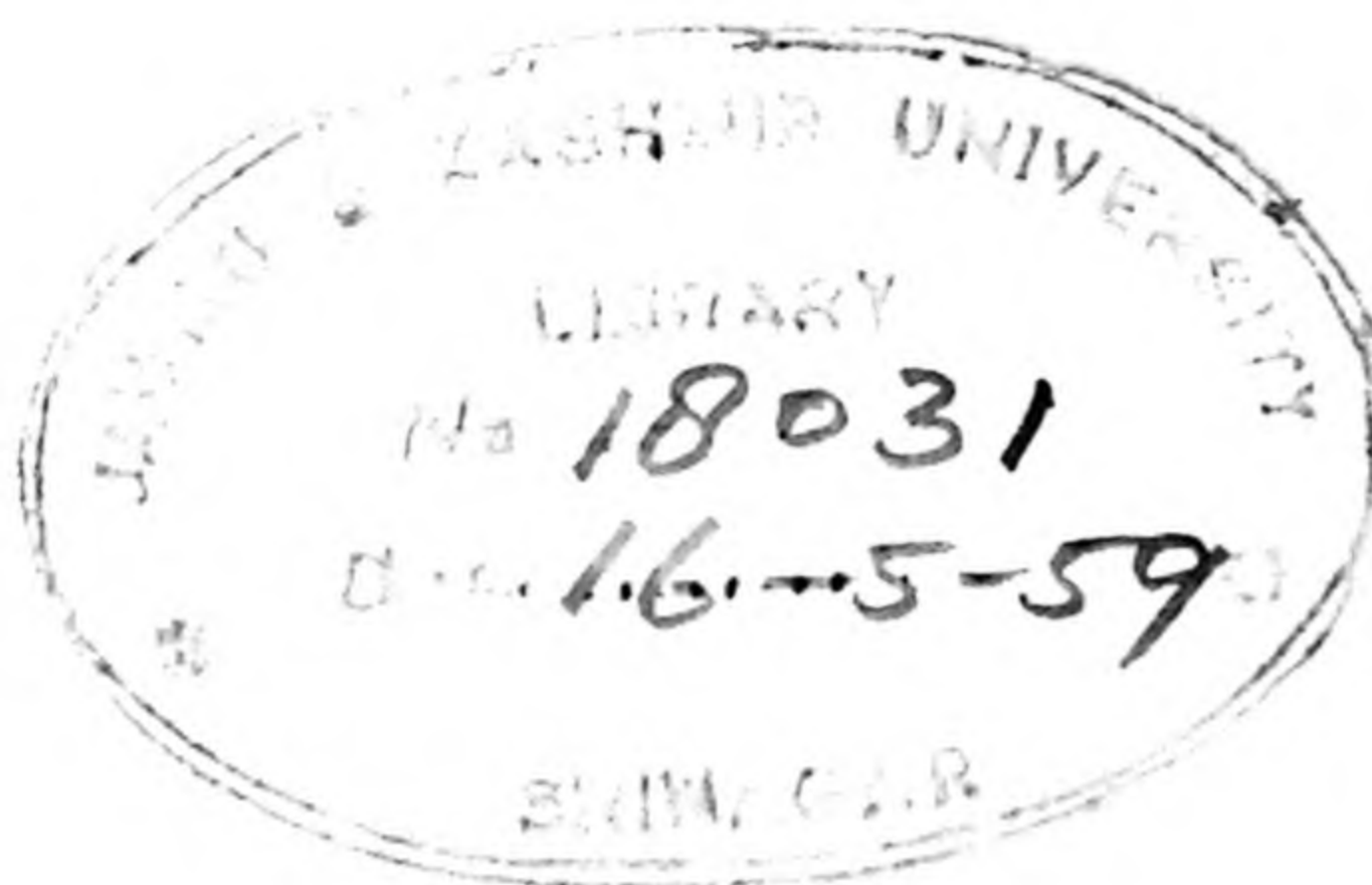
in spite of deep suspicions and distrusts.' The only condition more appalling, less practical, than world government is the lack of it in this atomic age. Most of the scientists who produced the bomb admit that. Nationalism and the split atom cannot coexist in the planet.

Leadership is the thing, really. And we seem not to have it, anywhere in the world. Premier Stalin's speeches have been strictly jingo since the end of the war. President Truman carries a clipping about the 'parliament of man' in his wallet, and keeps his pocket buttoned. It takes a small country like Egypt even to speak the dissenting words. The large countries speak more cautiously and circle around each other like dogs that haven't been introduced, sniffing each other's behinds and keeping their hackles at alert. The whole business of the bomb tests at Bikini is a shocking bit of hackle-raising, which is almost enough in itself to start a bitter fight in the crazy arena of amorphous fear. One scientist remarked the other day that the chances of the explosion's doing some irreparable damage to the world were one in a hundred septillion. Very good. And if there is one such chance, who can authorize the show? What is the name of the fabulous ringmaster who can play with the earth and announce the odds? There is no such character. The natives who were tossed off Bikini are the most distinguished set of displaced persons in the world, because they symbolize the displacement that will follow the use of atomic power for military purposes. If one atomic bomb goes off, in real earnest, the rest of us will leave our Bikinis for fair—some in the heat of stars, some in the remains of human flesh in a ruined earth.

Government is the thing. Law is the thing. Not brother-

hood, not international co-operation, not security councils that can stop war only by waging it. Where do human rights arise, anyway? In the sun, in the moon, in the daily paper, in the conscientious heart? They arise in responsible government. Where does security lie, anyway—security against the thief, the murderer, the footpad? In brotherly love? Not at all. It lies in government. Where does control lie—control of smoking in the theater, of nuclear energy in the planet? Control lies in government, because government is people. Where there are no laws, there is no law enforcement. Where there are no courts, there is no justice.

A large part of the world is illiterate. Most of the people have a skin color different from the pink we are familiar with. Perhaps government is impossible to achieve in a globe preponderantly ignorant, preponderantly 'foreign,' with no common language, no common ground except music and childbirth and death and taxes. Nobody can say that government will work. All one can guess is that it must be given an honest try, otherwise our science will have won the day, and the people can retire from the field, to lie down with the dinosaur and the heath hen—who didn't belong here either, apparently.



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



18031

Rinehart Editions

- AMERICAN THOUGHT (Civil War to First World War) 70
ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE 45
ANTHOLOGY OF GREEK DRAMA: FIRST SERIES, Agamemnon, Oedipus the King, Antigone, Medea, Hippolytus, Lysistrata 29
ANTHOLOGY OF GREEK DRAMA: SECOND SERIES, Prometheus Bound, Choephoroe, Eumenides, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus, The Trojan Women, The Bacchae, The Clouds, The Frogs 68
Arnold, Matthew, SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE 62
Austen, Jane, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 22
Balzac, Honoré de, PÈRE GORIOT 18
THE BIBLE: SELECTIONS FROM THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS 56
Brontë, Charlotte, JANE EYRE 24
Brontë, Emily, WUTHERING HEIGHTS 23
Browning, Robert, SELECTED POETRY 71
Bunyan, John, THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS 27
Butler, Samuel, THE WAY OF ALL FLESH 7
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, SELECTED POETRY AND LETTERS 54
Chaucer, Geoffrey, THE CANTERBURY TALES 65
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE 55
COLONIAL AMERICAN WRITING 43
Cooper, James Fenimore, THE PRAIRIE 26
Crane, Stephen, THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE AND SELECTED PROSE AND POETRY 47
Dante, THE DIVINE COMEDY 72
Defoe, Daniel, MOLL FLANDERS 25
De Forest, John William, MISS RAVENEL'S CONVERSION 74
Dickens, Charles, GREAT EXPECTATIONS 20
Dryden, John, SELECTED WORKS 60
Eliot, George, ADAM BEDE 32
ELIZABETHAN FICTION 64
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, SELECTED PROSE AND POETRY 30
Fielding, Henry, JOSEPH ANDREWS 15
FIFTEEN MODERN AMERICAN POETS 79
Flaubert, Gustav, MADAME BOVARY 2
Franklin, Benjamin, AUTOBIOGRAPHY 12
Garland, Hamlin, MAIN-TRAVELLED ROADS 66
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, FAUST: PART I 75
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER, THE NEW MELUSINA, NOVELLE 13
Gogol, Nikolai, DEAD SOULS 5
GREAT ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ESSAYS 34

Hardy, Thomas, THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE 9
 Hardy, Thomas, THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE 39
 Hauptmann, Gerhart, THREE PLAYS: The Weavers, Hannele, The Beaver
 Coat 52
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, THE SCARLET LETTER 1
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, SELECTED TALES AND SKETCHES 33
 Howells, William Dean, THE RISE OF SILAS LAPHAM 19
 Ibsen, Henrik, THREE PLAYS: Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The
 Wild Duck 4
 Irving, Washington, SELECTED PROSE 41
 James, Henry, THE AMERICAN 16
 James, Henry, SELECTED SHORT STORIES 31
 Johnson, Samuel, SELECTED PROSE AND POETRY 57
 Keats, John, SELECTED POETRY AND LETTERS 50
 LITERATURE OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC 44
 London, Jack, MARTIN EDEN 80
 Melville, Herman, MOBY DICK 6
 Melville, Herman, SELECTED TALES AND POEMS 36
 Milton, John, PARADISE LOST AND SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE 35
 MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE 53
 Norris, Frank, MC TEAGUE 40
 Parkman, Francis, THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT WEST: LA SALLE 77
 Poe, Edgar Allan, SELECTED PROSE AND POETRY, Rev. 42
 POETRY OF THE NEW ENGLAND RENAISSANCE, 1790-1890 38
 Pope, Alexander, SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE 46
 THE RINEHART BOOK OF SHORT STORIES 59
 THE RINEHART BOOK OF VERSE 58
 Scott, Sir Walter, THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN 14
 Shakespeare, William, FIVE PLAYS: Hamlet; King Lear; Henry IV, Part I;
 Much Ado about Nothing; The Tempest 51
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE 49
 Smollett, Tobias, HUMPHRY CLINKER 48
 Spenser, Edmund, SELECTED POETRY 73
 Sterne, Laurence, TRISTRAM SHANDY 37
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, MASTER OF BALLANTRAE 67
 Swift, Jonathan, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS 10
 Swift, Jonathan, SHORTER PROSE AND POETRY 78
 Tennyson, Alfred, SELECTED POETRY 69
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, VANITY FAIR 76
 Thoreau, Henry David, WALDEN, ON THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE 8
 Trollope, Anthony, BARCHESTER TOWERS 21
 Turgenev, Ivan, FATHERS AND CHILDREN 17
 Twain, Mark, THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN 11
 Twain, Mark, ROUGHING IT 61
 Vergil, THE AENEID 63
 Whitman, Walt, LEAVES OF GRASS AND SELECTED PROSE 28
 Wordsworth, William, THE PRELUDE, WITH SELECTED SONNETS AND MINOR
 POEMS, Rev. and Enl. 3

